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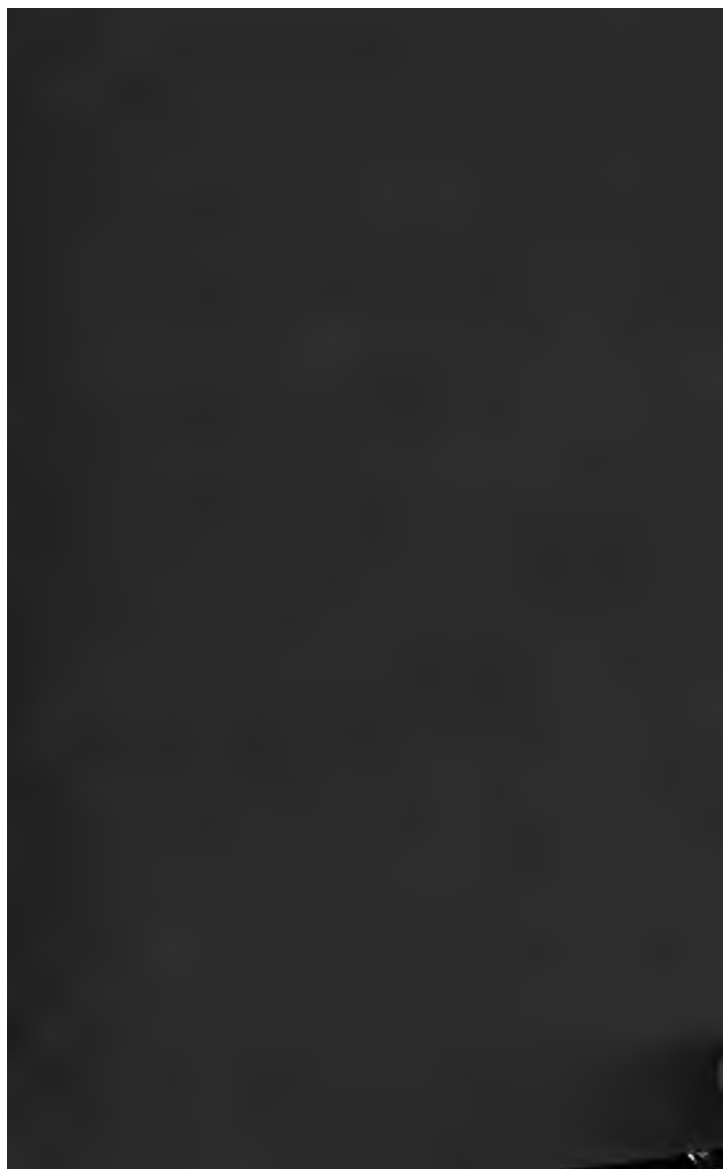
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If they indeed fleet by, dear Alice, when they are driven away, we see beyond them. The loveliness of the sky never fades."—Page 144.

MARY AND ALICE;
OR,
THE HIGHEST ATTAINMENT.

BY THE
AUTHORESS OF THE "HISTORY OF MARY EVANS."




SEELEY, JACKSON, & HALLIDAY, FLEET STREET,
LONDON. MDCCCLXVIII.

250. t. 199.

**ANY PROFITS ARISING FROM THE SALE OF THIS LITTLE
VOLUME WILL BE DEVOTED TO CHARITABLE PURPOSES.**

**"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father
is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction,
and to keep himself unspotted from the world."—JAMES
i. 27.**



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TO MY
ELDEST DAUGHTER
OF
ENTERING HER FIFTEENTH
NEW YEAR.

MARY AND ALICE.

CHAPTER I.

HOMELESS ONES.

THE sun shone brightly on the green fields; glistening drops of dew still lay scattered on each narrow blade of grass, or were the nurslings of some lovely flower; sweetly the glad notes of many birds flowed through the warm fragrant air; and while light silvery clouds chased each other beneath the clear blue sky; while sheep were browsing in the meadows, and butterflies, with their sulphur-coloured wings, flitted airily from flower to flower; everything, in the far spread landscape, seemed calculated to fill man's heart with grateful gladness.

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him in his sorrows. No longer ready to start up in rebellion, and question the goodness of his Maker, he buried his face in his small, colourless hands, and bent in submission to the will of Heaven.

And while the orphan wept, the merry ploughboy passed by, whistling as he went along ; then followed the light-hearted village maidens, and the child lifted up his face and turned to listen to their blithe voices, and to watch their sunny smiles. Each girl carried by either side a well-filled milk-pail ; they paused, and for an instant ceased to sing as they observed the sufferers. One lingered longer than the rest, and a look of pity sped from her eyes ; yet in a moment she, too, was gone, and her rising sigh was checked, or lost amid the swelling sounds of joy that again streamed from the lips of the girls, then faded into silence, as the group disappeared in the distance.

Again the flush of hope spreads over the boy's youthful brow ; he listens to another sound approaching, and no sooner does his

eager glance alight on a horseman, advancing at a slow, even pace, than quickly springs the little beggar from his lowly posture, and, holding forth his ragged cap, he supplicates for alms.

But the horseman meets, with unchanged look and pace, the pleading child, and continues to hum a few notes which he had heard the fair and the gentle sing, amid festive scenes, but a few hours previously.

In sadness those tones were heard by the poor boy; but sadder still to him was the succeeding stillness.

And while the rich man rode heedlessly by, his inanimate sympathies, covered with the sable pall of lethargy, Satan tried once again to nerve the child, to snap with ingratitude, the chain which united him to God.

Oh! had that wily one but tempted the child, who, like Timothy, had known the Scriptures from his infancy, to lie, or to steal! "Thou shalt not steal," and "Thou shalt not bear false witness," are words that would have darted from his lips like lightning, to

sear the hopes of the destroyer. But his young heart was less able to resist the whispered doubts of a Heavenly Father's love and impartial dealings. Yet bravely he struggled against the torrent of impetuous emotions which once more heaved his chest, and blanched his cheek, till again a friendly flood of tears came to his relief. Poor boy ! What can a child do but weep—when he knows it is his Father's hand that inflicts each chastening stroke ?

And the old man looked with pity on his sorrowing grandson, and strove to raise his drooping courage with kindly-spoken words of holy counsel:

“Cheer up, my little man !” he said ; “it would take longer to count God's mercies to us than you think, and we could soon number our sorrows ; but we will talk of these things as we journey on our way. It is quite time to be stirring now ; for we shall get along but slowly to-day, I doubt ; yet I hope, by night-fall we shall reach our friends. It has been a long step for such a child and such an old

man. There, that's right! dry your eyes, lad, and open your Bible, that before we start we may be comforted with some of the good promises. They will help to keep up our spirits by the way ; and, never fear, the worst of our troubles are passed. I know every inch of the road now. We shall not have to spend another night in the open air, I think."

Then angels saw the small but sacred volume drawn from the beggar's bosom, and watched the sweet expression of confiding love and submission, which gradually effaced all traces of the recent storm from that childish countenance. They heard the voice of age, and the voice of youth, sweetly uniting to speak their Maker's praise. What matter that those homeless ones occupy a lowly position on earth? Angels recognize them as "heirs of salvation," unto whom they are sent to minister. They know that a Heavenly Father sees his returning children, even whilst afar off; and they rejoice when the Comforting Spirit from above descends on a forgiven child.

And whilst angels rejoiced in Heaven, and received commissions of grace to the needy, Satan fled from the young believer, finding him no easy prey, knowing that if the little beggar even *died*, angels would carry him, as they did Lazarus of old, and lay him in Abraham's bosom.

Reader, will you join Satan in his conflict, and help to destroy the faith in God which is sometimes slender and drooping? Or will you work with angels, and by compassion and brotherly love, lead your Heavenly Father's children to their happier home?

CHAPTER II.

MINISTERS OF MERCY, SEEN AND NOT SEEN.

EIGHT times the village clock had struck the hours of morning. The sun shone on the golden hair of children who were playing in the lane; it peeped through the latticed windows of the cottage-home; and its bright rays lit the brows of the wealthy, who were still wrapped in repose.

Angels had sped both to and fro' between Heaven and earth, and while of their countless multitudes, hosts sang "Hallelujahs on high," myriads again fulfilled missions of mercy from God to man, in obedience to Divine command.

Some watched over the poor man's hearth, some stayed by the rich man's bed; but all sought an instance of faith they might report

in Heaven with joy. The burden of a contrite heart, the fragrant incense of thanksgiving, or the breath of prayer, their spotless wings would have been readily expanded to waft on high.

The cheek of the young and the fair, beautiful with the rich glow of health upon it, was still pressed on the sun-lit pillow of down, —the hand, unused to toil, delicately white and small, lay lightly on the spotless counterpane.

She was the daughter of affluence; unheeded gold had procured for her every luxury by which she was surrounded; and little recked that high-born girl of the reeking brow and the “care-full” heart of the industrious poor, whose labour supplied her creature comforts.

As mist on the flowers, so lightly stole dreams of fairy-like beauty around the sleeping maiden. Dreams were they which entranced her, yet woven of the golden threads of a bright reality; for hitherto life had been to her a morn of unclouded splendour. Standing

on the height of exalted station, she had indeed from afar looked down on the valley and the gorge; clouds had rolled beneath her feet, and she had seen storms sweep over the humble poor. But all the while sunshine had flooded her sky, and its streams had played around her feet. Not a cloudlet had drifted overhead, to fling its light shade across her path; so she trod not on life's shadows.

She awakes, as the subdued voice of one who had nursed her in earlier years whispers her name. Every want has been anticipated, and she hastens through her task of dressing, scarcely sensible of the exertion it requires. Throughout the day, on faces she loves her eyes beam with affection; her brow is no stranger to a sister's kiss, and the smiles of fond parents await her morning salutation.


Several hours have passed, and now two light-hearted and beautiful girls are seen loitering on the smooth green lawn, bending over the gay flower-beds, and at length, passing the limits of the garden, they walk slowly down the shady lane.

"What a lovely day!" Mary exclaimed, as her bright eye wandered from object to object, and her countenance was animated with delight.

"And glorious too, Mary," answered Alice, speaking in a low pensive voice, as she passed her arm within her sister's, and standing still awhile, seemed to linger that her mind might dwell on the landscape.

Her eye rested now on the village and the green fields stretched in a deep valley below ; now on the bright foliage of the woods which covered the opposite hills, or on the sunny heavens which seemed to vault the landscape.

She was listening, too, to the sweet notes warbled cheerily by a little lark, which soared so high that it was difficult to discern the tiny speck it appeared to be as it progressed in its upward flight. Louder and clearer its strains were heard, till, breathless with suspense, the sisters smiled at last and proceeded on their way, for the little songster had darted downwards, and even as its foot alighted on the green sod its song was ended.



Was it *chance* led those gentle girls down that long pleasant lane, and on through the green meadows, to the very stile on which two weary travellers had found their second resting-place that morning? Or had the old man's and the orphan boy's ministering spirits been permitted by the Father of the fatherless to bring them, as fit human instruments to employ in God's service?

When the sisters reached the stile, an old man was seated on the step, while a young boy reclined beside him. His cap was thrown on the ground; his head rested against his companion's knee; his raven curls were pushed off from the clear white brow they had protected from the scorching rays of the summer sun, which had tanned the boy's colourless cheeks and hands.

It required but little discernment to recognize poverty and distress in the appearance of the wayfarers, who silently arose that the ladies might pass. What, then, deterred the young girls from offering assistance to those who had refrained from expressing their need?

There is a dignity in endurance which commands respect; and delicacy of feeling made those gentle sisters hesitate to intrude on the sacred subject of the sorrows of their fellow-creatures, so long as the sufferers reserved it.

Yet they could not pass quite away, without manifesting their willingness to alleviate any distress, that might be within reach of their assistance. They lingered within distance of a few paces from the stile for several moments. Mary, with an amateur artist's eye, tracing on her memory what she was quick to appreciate, as a fitting subject to employ her skilful pencil. The boy's well-outlined profile; his full, melancholy eye; his easy, unstudied attitude; and the old man's contrasting figure. And while she admired she pitied, and wished to help, the sufferers. Humanity was there.

Alice, meanwhile, standing with the oil of Christian sympathy ready, waiting for a suitable moment when she might induce the afflicted ones, to lay bare the wounds which she wished to bind up and to heal. And

while gospel promises hovered on her lips, wherewith she hoped to tie the drooping spirits of her fellow-creatures to their only steadfast support, even Jesus, her hand involuntarily glided into her pocket, and touched the purse which lay there ; but before it could be drawn forth, her brow and her cheek became suffused with deepening colour ; delicacy interfered again, and her slender fingers were hastily and nervously closed over the tribute of kindness she wished, but still hesitated, to offer to those whom she only conjectured required such assistance.

At length, retracing a few steps towards the stile, she ventured to say,

“ We think you are strangers here, and we don’t like to pass without asking if we can help you.”

The old man, poor as he was, marked the timid tone of voice ; he saw the quick, kind glance, succeeded by the downcast eyelid, and knew that the lips which were trembling trembled only under the weight of kindly feelings, which lingered untold upon them ;

and he rose again from his resting-place, and his eye kindled, and his own voice trembled in its earnestness as he replied,

“God bless you, miss! You can indeed help us.”

Gratitude filled the old man’s heart and the little boy’s with happiness; for it set value on that Christian smile, on that glistening eye, and simple word of kindness, that was the tribute of a respectful sympathy.

“I am glad we came this way,” continued Alice, finding the old man did not say anything more. “In what manner can we be most useful to you?”

“Miss, I was little thinking to tell my humble tale of suffering to anyone. You see, ladies” (and there was, for a moment, something like pride in his tone), “I’m not used to a begging life, and I can’t call myself a stranger here, for the first three-score years of my life were spent within half a dozen miles of this place. But ten years since, I buried my daughter, this boy’s mother, in Lytton churchyard. I dare say you know Lytton,

ladies. It's not more than two miles from here, but our village lies about four or five on the other side."

"Yes, we live about half a mile from Lytton Church. We always go there on Sundays," replied Mary.

"In my young days there were not half the churches in the land that there are in these times, and there was none between Silverton and Lytton; but every Sabbath morn my father and I used to walk over the fells, and it makes me feel fresh and young again even now, to call to mind those bonnie days. The hours we've sat on the old tombstones, resting us a bit in the sunshine, and hearkening to the sweet bells, and greeting everybody as they thronged up the pathway leading to the north door. Aye, many a hand I've shaken in those days that I shall never clasp again. Many are the years since then; my father and my mother lie low, my wife and my children—the bell has tolled for them all. And here I am, and my little grandson, going back to the old place, that

my bones may be laid in the grave of my fathers."

"But how did it happen, poor man, that at sixty years of age you left your native place, and are going back now, so poor and so friendless?"

"This boy's father was a soldier, miss; his regiment was ordered abroad about six months after his marriage, and I begged him not to take my last child away from me. I bade him go and count the names of her sisters and brothers that were already buried, and told him he might choose whether he would leave her in the shelter of her home, or leave her beneath the cold, restless wave. 'For,' said I, 'my girl will never outlive the voyage.' So, miss, at last he said it was best she should stay with me. Well, a few months after, she became a mother, and all went on well for nearly two years; then sad tidings reached us. Her husband was slain—slain before he had ever seen his boy! But his hand had written a father's blessing; and a letter, blistered with the tears of the wounded soldier, was placed

in the hands of my poor girl. She read his last words to her, words of blessing, and words of undying love. Then she never looked up again. Poor thing! it would have grieved any one just to have seen her: once she began to droop, you might see how she withered away from day to day, just like the Bible says, 'like a flower cut down.'

"One night, I was sitting watching beside her, and we could scarcely tell that she breathed; but I saw her lips move, and I thought she said, 'Father;' so I stooped till my face was close to hers, and it seemed strength was given to her a minute; she wanted to speak so ill. 'Father,' she said again. 'What, my child?' I said. 'Father! There shall be no more sea!'


"I knew what she was thinking of, and the grief rose in my throat. I could not answer her, but such a look of joy came over her face. I knew the hope of seeing her husband in another world made her smile so; then in a bit it all passed away, and she said, 'Father, is it night?'

“ ‘Yes, my love,’ I said, ‘but the fire is bright, and the candle is burning.’ ”

“ ‘Father; then I’ve entered the dark valley; but I will fear no evil, for God is with me. . . . I am going where “there shall be no more sea,” “and there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light.” ’ ”

“ She ceased to speak, and she ceased to breathe; not a sigh, not a struggle. It was sore parting; yet I could not but thank God for the way in which she had been taken.

“ She is the sixth grown up child I have, lying with my father, my mother, and my wife, in two graves, side by side; and when she died I had no one left but one son, who had married early, and settled in the south. He came to his sister’s funeral, and nothing would do but I and the little one must go back with him. And I was fain to do so, for what with bringing up a large family, and giving them decent learning, then, just as they grew up, one dying of consumption after another, I had very little left; and it would



not have answered for an old man like I was getting, to go on renting a farm much longer, unless a son of my own had been at hand to look after it a bit. So we went. And oh, miss, it would take a lifetime to tell you of all the comforts and the blessings we enjoyed, until six months ago.

“ A good son, my son was ; but he is gone home. Our Father has taken him, as well as the others from me. His will be done.”

The man paused a few moments, and then continued—

“ With a few pounds in my pocket, the boy and I started to come back to ‘my own country,’ and my son’s widow returned to her father’s house.

“ We left M—— in good health, but damp beds in wayside lodging-houses, and so much fatigue, brought an illness on me which wasted away our few pounds, till we had not as many shillings ; then, soon after, we had only pence to count, and last night, miss, we had not what would pay for a lodging. This has been our worst trial ; we feel weak and sorrowful

this morning ; scarcely strong enough to reach the old place to-night, though I'm bent on doing so."

"And have you no friend to go to now?"

"I must not say so, miss. It's true that as years pass, they bear away friends and acquaintance; but there was one that said over and over again, when we were setting out, that I might always reckon on him being like a father to this boy, and like a son to myself, if the day ever came that would prove him. His first wife was my girl's sister-in-law ; she died before her brother did, and left a little girl about eight years old, motherless. You may be sure the poor child was nearly 'heartbroke.' It was all lonesome at the farm when the mother was gone. So the little one used to come to us ; it seemed as if it was more like old times in our house than in her own, and it cheered her up ; so at last her father let her come to us altogether, seeing she'd be taken better care of, and the baby was quite a plaything for her. Aye, we were all getting round again from that trouble when

the worst came upon us. Well, if either Lucy or her father be living now, I know they will be kind to the boy; and for myself I shall be thankful to take refuge in the poor-house."


"Oh! no, they will never let you do so; that would be very hard at your time of life," said Mary, speaking impulsively.

"If I could at one time of my life have foreseen it, I should have said so too, young ladies; but not now. Now, I can both bear the thought and be thankful."

It was touching to see that meek, submissive old man, as again, in the silence that followed, he bowed his head and let his thoughts wander afar. And as the young girls gazed at him, a feeling of wonder and reverence crept over them; while their minds vainly tried to reach the eminence of faith on which the more experienced believer could stand; neither shaken by adversity's winds, nor daunted by the yawning abyss of poverty; but apparently seeing nothing, save an unbroken hemisphere of heavenly love and promises, stretched above, around, him.

Like the great blue concave sky seems amid the still sunshine,—when not a cloud chequers it, and a solitary man stands on some dizzy height, gazing upward, unmindful of the fearful depth below ; rejoicing in the warmth, the light, and loveliness which, sufficient for the whole creation, yet overwhelm not the single atom that they cheer ; save man's spirit only, which they do overwhelm with solemn, though delightful, emotion, which they do impel towards the Throne of Grace ; there to pour forth the tribute of a grateful heart, in the words, " Glory be to Thee, Thou Creator of the heavens ; Glory be to Thee, O Lord most high."

Thus seemed, to that venerable believer, his past experience of Divine love and mercy, which had for him alone, expanded over a life of seventy years ; and he could not long ponder on the past without gratitude raising his heart to the Giver of all good things he had enjoyed. Gradually the calm spirit became fervent ; and beautiful it was to watch a corresponding expression spread over every feature, till his uplifted eye became brimful of Heavenly joy,



and the tranquil smile of inward peace rested on his lips ; while his worn-out and travel-soiled garments seemed to say, " He has no treasure here."

With deep emotion Alice spoke, after a short time. She kindly encouraged the weary wayfarers to proceed on their journey, and promised them rest and refreshment in her father's house.

Who can tell how pure was the happiness those sisters felt as they kindly led the way ; Mary drawing forth from the little boy minute details of his fatiguing journey, and Alice holding more serious conversation with the aged man.

" Poor little fellow !" exclaimed Mary. " Alice, only fancy ; last night they were refused the shelter of even an outbuilding."

" Oh, miss, we must not complain ; it is only one night out of three hundred and sixty-five seventy times counted. That thought is enough."

" Poor old man," said Alice ; " you have had many sorrows ; but you have one bless-

ing that makes up for all. Oh, what a blessing !”

“Do you mean peace, miss ? It is the best gift of Heaven ; the world can’t rob me of that.”

“You remind me of those beautiful words our Saviour spoke to his disciples, ‘Peace I leave with you. My peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.’ I am sure your peace must be ‘The peace of God which passeth all understanding.’”

“Thank you twenty times, young lady, for those words. Indeed, I do humbly hope, my peace of mind is altogether in knowing God, in feeling his love, and in loving Him myself. I never doubt. I feel confident that everything which happens is for ‘good to them that love God.’ And I love Him. He knows I do.”

Oh ! when we see the garb of poverty, let us never pause to question the character of the inner man it covers.

Did Christ refuse to heal the *ten* lepers ?


Though He, from whom no secrets are hid, must have known well, that only *one* would turn back and glorify God !

Does not God Himself shower his blessings on all men ?

He gives the rain, and the sunshine, and the riches of increase, alike unto the evil doer and unto the believer.

Then, while *God withholds judgment* ; shall we, *dare we, withhold mercy* ?

If morality would turn away in disgust from vice, Christ and Christianity would rather lavish love, and pity, and kindness, on the sinner, to draw him by the cords of charity from the error of his way. If the affluent suspect crime where there is poverty, better let the suspicion die ; a stranger to indigence knows not the temptations that beset it ; and the Christian cannot find in God's holy word any excuse, for not lending to the Lord by giving to the poor, for there he reads—" Judge not, that ye be not judged ; for with whatsoever judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged."



CHAPTER III.

OLD FRIENDS.

THE crimson banner of evening had unfurled its gorgeous folds; cloud against cloud stretched high overhead, and far along the western horizon; and the sun seemed like an expanding ball of fire, growing bigger and bigger, as he crowned the tops of the dark and distant mountains behind which he was sinking rapidly.

Yet when the sun was set, the molten tide of his glory was still spread afar, laving both earth and sky. The ruddy clouds slowly and lingeringly gathered themselves together till every fold lay smooth and bright, and all around them was stretched a fair expanse of light fleecy clouds, hovering between earth and sky; here and there the pale blush of

eventide intermingling with the golden lines and the purple tints, and the seeming rocks of silver which glowed so brightly there.

The merry voices of the juvenile gleaners were no longer heard in the lanes, or in the corn-fields; but clusters of happy children still prattled near every cottage door, and their tiny hands chafed the husky corn, and blue eyes sparkled, and rosy lips smiled, as the little ones vied one with another who could amass the largest hoard of grain, and be the first to empty her little pinafore into her mother's lap.

Oh! the sweet joy that flows into a young heart, when a mother's smile, or a mother's kiss, is the precious reward of an infant effort. This pure gladness was felt by many of those little ones that evening, before they lay down on their humble beds, to enjoy the night's repose.

In the same hour of twilight, the old man and his orphan grandson stood by the wicket of a cottage garden. Festoons of woodbine, laden with their fragrant flowers, mantled the

trellis porch ; and both the white and the purple clematis mingled their blossoms amongst the roses that had clambered up to the bedroom windows ; pansies, pinks, and daisies, ten week stocks of many hues, and the fragrant lavender, all blossomed in that narrow crowded spot, and the tired travellers smiled, and for a moment forgot their weariness, as they inhaled the delicious fragrance, and admired the blended colours that glowed around them.

But soon the man's eye roamed beyond the narrow boundaries of that little garden, roamed down the hill-side, along the high-road that crossed the valley in which his native village nestled ; past woodland, and the bridge that spanned the river ; on, to the white walls of a farm-house, which was partially seen amongst surrounding trees.

How often the old man had, in the happy days of boyhood, played beneath those large yews, the boughs of which loomed so darkly above the thick white mist that slowly uprose beneath and around them. In those fields, where the sheaves of corn were standing, how

often had his days of toil been spent; and through those open gates, how many times had he passed, mounted on loads of newly-made hay; or waving his cap, and joining in the labourer's shout of joy, as the last load of corn was drawn home, to be stored in the granary his father had erected.

But more than all, what hours had that now homeless man enjoyed around the hearth where the log burned brightly still! Its light, streaming through the uncurtained window, arrested the old man's eye, and he sighed to think of the unknown voices, and of the strangers' feet, that were at home in his early abode.

The scenes, the friends, the tones that had become thrice dear since they were no longer amongst the blessings spared to him, memory had for an instant restored.

But other memories follow darkly, in the bright train of by-gone joys. He sees again the fond mother of his children, bidding farewell to the loved ones who weep around her. Though long heavy years have passed since

then ; still the lone man, in thought, treads once again the weary way to the far-off churchyard, wherein are laid the remains of his faithful companion.


Sorrows, varying in form and shade, chequer that stretch of time which, to the old man, seems to lie between then and now.

Less thrift, much sickness, many deaths, till one young girl alone remained to cheer his once happy home.

And that one fair girl, with her light heart, and its gladness beaming on her lip and in her eye ; her elastic step bounding up the hill ; her merry laugh ringing in concert with the glad tones of the little Lucy, who used to run with outstretched arms and bid her welcome.

No wonder the old man thought of her ; though in the silence of death she slept, with the other dear ones of whom he pondered.

How often had he stood by the same little gate on which his arm was leaning, and had waited while his girl received from Lucy's mother counsel to guide her in the discharge



of such domestic duties as would otherwise have been too arduous for so young a girl to fulfil.

No wonder, too, he loved his memory to linger amongst the trifling incidents of even Lucy's childhood. For, when he knew her in the early morning of her life, she was a fair child, with a gentle voice, a mild blue eye, and rosy lips that often were parted to speak a cheerful word, or to sing a pleasant song. She had glossy, golden hair, and a mother's hand used to linger fondly among the long, silken tresses, as her fingers twined them into ringlets.

Years had glided by since he had watched that young child's growth, yet he remembered how sweet a sight it was to see that Christian mother, training her little one in the faith and in the fear of God; and to mark how the object of her care grew in every Christian grace, as she grew in years and in loveliness.

Years had passed since that mother's brief task had ended; when he had seen the child

turn into the fields with saddened footsteps, and come home again, laden with the flowers of spring-time, such flowers as children delight in; yet without mirth in her voice, without gladness in her eye. He had followed her noiseless steps up the narrow stairs, and seen her burst into a flood of tears, when her little hands had tremulously strewn their offering upon and around the beloved dead.

Years had passed since then, yet still he could not forget that his daughter's hand had been stretched forth to draw the little bereaved one to her own loving bosom, to nestle by the baby boy that was already cradled there. He could not forget that he had seen the little mourner's tears all wiped away, and the smiles of a happy childhood restored again, by the fostering care of Edward's mother.

Gently these recollections stole over his mind, now and then suffusing his uplifted eye with a tear, yet oftener wreathing his lip with a smile of that joy which is a believer's portion.


But at last, under the various influences of



contending emotions, his breast heaved, and tears freely coursed one another down his furrowed cheek.

“Grandfather!” exclaimed the boy, inquiringly and soothingly. Then, with his young hand, he brushed the unbidden tears off his companion’s face. Poor boy! he recognized not the tribute to his mother’s worth, and marvelled that his grandsire wept at the end of his journey; for, in all their wanderings and weariness, his soul had never fainted, nor his mind seemed disquieted.

“You may well wonder, lad, to see there’s a drop of feeling in the old well yet. ‘Belike’ you thought so many sorrows had left your grandfather’s heart all dry long since. Well! something does tell me these foolish tears are about the last that ever will dim my eyes. Nay! the sorrow is e’en gone already. I’m every bit as fain and as proud, as I am o’er ready with this drop of grief, to think that I stand on the old ground again. But come on, my boy! It’s much but we’re forgotten. I can scarce reckon on Lucy knowing us; but




I make sure her father will know us, and make us right welcome too."

The old man cast one more lingering look at the light which glimmered amidst the distant yews, then hurried nervously along the narrow gravel walk with eager, trembling footstep. His impatient hand had scarcely knocked at the door, before his fingers pressed the latch, and the next instant they stood before Lucy and her step-mother.

Speechless with emotion the old man stood; the little boy also mutely raised his dark eyes, and, cap in hand, looked appealingly at the kind-looking matron, and the village maiden.

"You seek a night's rest?" asked the woman; "there's not such a thing as a lodging to be had for money in all this place. But for the love of God, come in and welcome. This bonnie harvest time, none should want supper and a bed; least of all, those that are either too old or too young to work. Come in, come in, and sit you down in my good-man's chair," she continued, at the same time



shaking up the loose cushion which was in a large elbow-chair in the most sheltered corner of the fireside.

“There ! give me your stick and your hat, and sit down. How tired you seem !” said Lucy ; then noticing his increasingly tottering step, she kindly placed his aged hand on her arm and guided him to the seat. “You will be better soon, poor man ! And now my little fellow, hang up your cap. You shall have a bowl of nice boiled bread and milk directly ; that will do you good, won’t it ?”

Quickly and nimbly the young maiden filled up the pan that was steaming on the polished bar, set two additional basins on the round table, and then placed chairs for the travellers by the three that were previously arranged.

“I thank God,” exclaimed the old man, rising, as soon as he could master his emotion, “I thank God He has spared me to see this hour ; and a thousand blessings on thee, Lucy, and on thy mother, for the welcome thou hast given to us—warmer and kinder it need not be

even now, when I tell thee that this boy is thy little cousin, and I am Henry, his grandfather."

"Henry! and Edward! My own little Teddy, that I've nursed and played with so often!"

Tears sprang into her eyes as she said, "Is it possible I could forget you!"

The old man's hand slid off the youthful head on which, in blessing, he had laid it, and he sank again into the easy-chair from which he had risen.

Tenderly and soothingly Lucy raised the grey locks off the man's aged brow, and pressed her rosy lips against his cheek, then in a low voice said, "I remember your kindness, Henry, though I did not remember you."

"And my Mary's?" he asked.

"Yes, as a mother's."

"Aye! a mother indeed, till her heart was broken. My poor Mary."

"We have often talked of you and wondered how you were getting on. I know

father 'll be right glad to see you. Hark! yes, that's him;" and the girl sprang forward to open the door. But why did she step back so coyly, with downcast eye and glowing cheek? Why did the words of welcome that hung on her lips remain unspoken?

Her father knew why, and he laid his broad honest hand on her shining hair, as he opened wider the cottage door to let a young man enter, and looking at her with a father's pride, he said,

"All right, Lucy; a good daughter makes a good wife—George has chosen wisely. As for himself, he's a hard working lad, and as dutiful a son as can be found far or near; he'll make thee a good husband, so I say all right. I'm not the man to hinder the happiness of my own child, if I know it."


By this time, however, he caught sight of his aged guest; and, not like Lucy's, his memory was quick to recognize an old friend.

With many kind words he grasped the old man's hands between his own; he patted the little boy, and then sitting by the table, drew

the willing child to his side, and again and again gave to both the wanderers a most affectionate welcome.

When supper was ended, the good housewife and her daughter withdrew for the purpose of preparing "the spare chamber" for their friends, and the men talked together of occurrences which had taken place during their long separation.

"Henry," the good farmer said, "you've just seen my wife ; perhaps you've heard before that I married my late landlord's daughter, and when her father died we found he had left to us both the cottage and the land I had rented under him so many years. We have had no family, and farming has done well for us, and we've often wished you and the boy had settled with us when Mary died. But now that I'm so soon to part with our girl Lucy, it seems as if Providence had sent you just in time, that we may not feel lonesome when she is gone. Both you and the boy must make this your home ; and never think *the man whose daughter filled a mother's place*



towards my little Lucy owes me anything for the kindness I only return. Nay, you must not say a word; the boy will be no burden here—a bit of a lad on the farm makes little difference; he'll deserve his bread, I warrant him."

Happily the minutes sped by till the clock in the corner struck ten, an unusual hour for the inmates of that dwelling to be lingering around the fireside. Then they all bent the knee uniting in family devotion: a few simple words of thanksgiving for the safe return of the wanderers were mingled with the supplications offered to the Most High.

But in the privacy of that neat, white-curtained little chamber which was hospitably assigned to the recent wanderers, the young boy arose from his knees with tear-bedewed cheeks, yet a serene, joy-lit face, and laying his hand within his grandsire's, he murmured softly, "You are right, grandfather, God is good; God is very good. Oh! I am sorry that fear and hunger made me so impatient this morning!"

While the pale moonbeams streamed into the silent chamber, and calm slumbers refreshed the weary travellers, holy angels still kept the charge a Heavenly Father gave them over the heirs of his salvation.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MELVILLES.

WHILE the little orphan and his aged grandfather were once more experiencing the blessing of having a home and kindred—while they sat by the flickering blaze that warmed and lighted the farmer's cheerful kitchen, another home, and another fireside, admitted and welcomed "a worthy guest." Let us for a while follow the unseen, yet ministering spirits that were witnesses there of a pure and holy resolve.

In a neatly-furnished sitting-room were assembled the members of a family whose position was evidently in the middle class of society.

There were two strikingly good-looking children—a boy, perhaps twelve years old, and

a girl, who appeared to be about fourteen. Their father was a handsome middle-aged man. Every glance of his eye, as it turned on his wife or his children, every intonation of his voice when he spoke to them, was expressive of the pride and the delight he felt in his home circle ; and the happy, unrestrained confidence and affection apparent in the children's manners towards both parents, conveyed an instantaneous impression that, through life, they had been accustomed to much parental tenderness, and free interchange of thought and feeling.

The little girl had adjusted the ample folds of the warm-looking crimson curtains, placed a pair of slippers in front of the fender, reached her mamma's work-basket, and her brother's drawing box ; then she stood a moment unnoticed, leaning over her father's shoulder, before she said—

“ Papa, I think I can manage my part now in the new song you gave me. May I open the piano ? and will you try it with me ? ”

“ Not at present, Anna, dear. I have

something to tell you all, something your mother will be delighted to hear."

Several guesses were playfully made by the wife, and the children, as to the nature of the news.

"You cannot guess. But, Clara, tell us frankly, what has been the one drawback to your happiness during the last fifteen years?"

A bright red colour mantled the mother's cheeks and brow in a moment. Her eye glanced rapidly at her husband, then at her children, who looked in surprise at each parent alternately.

"What do you mean, papa? Mamma is always happy," exclaimed Anna.

"Not always, my dear. Don't you remember having at any time seen tears in your mother's eyes, or having ever heard her speak more sadly than usual?"

"Ah! you mean last week, when you would not allow that poor family to sleep in the barn. You said there was the workhouse for them, and they ought to go there. Mamma was so sorry for them. But you know she

said you were right, and that it is dangerous to make a practice of sheltering vagrants. I think mamma cared most when you would not help any of the missionary societies. Did you not, mamma?"

The mother's face had by this time regained its usually placid expression, and, smiling affectionately at her husband, she answered Anna—

"I very much wished to act according to my own impulse; but there is scarcely any pain that lasts so short a time as that which is the result of self-restraint; submission seems to heal the wound which has been lacerated by the struggle of self-will. I never regret giving up, even in these matters; because I consider that, unless your father's opinion was changed, no blessing would rest on change of practice alone. You know what I mean. Papa acts on principle, and it is right to do so. If 'whatsoever is not of faith is sin,' I cannot think that the Saviour would regard kindnesses done by your father for *my sake* as done 'unto *Him*.' I think the highest appeal is made to

us to alleviate the sufferings of the poor as much as we possibly can; and when your father hears that appeal as plainly as I do, I am sure he will regard it."

"Well, then, Clara, what I have to tell you is, that my opinion is changed, and, from this day forward, I shall take care to fill my children's hands with gifts for the poor. I only hope Heaven will not disregard my prayers, that their hearts may be as abundantly filled with generous feelings and kindly sympathies as yours has always been. Mark what I say, my children: with deep sorrow I feel that I have incurred a fearful responsibility by hitherto endeavouring to eradicate from your minds a virtuous feeling, which, for the time to come, it shall be my care to cultivate. A mistaken zeal for your temporal welfare led me to adopt as my motto, 'Charity begins at home.' With these words you have invariably heard me answer every appeal made on behalf of public or of private charities. You, for whose sakes I determined to save all that could (without inconvenience) be spared of my income, that

you might be provided for if left fatherless, will, I trust, let this acknowledgment of erroneous opinion erase the impressions which my past course must have stamped on your youthful minds ; and while your feet become henceforth the willing messengers of mercy to the destitute, and your hearts grow warm with generous sympathy for the sorrowful, may you obtain from Heaven that mercy on your own behalf which all of us stand in need of."

"Now, my dear children, ask your mother to choose a new motto for us to adopt in future, and then I will tell you what has caused me to change my opinion with regard to indiscriminate almsgiving."

"Oh, thank you, dear papa," replied both the children at once ; "I am so glad." And staying but one moment by her father, to press one glad kiss on his cheek, Anna sprang to her mother's side, clasped her arms around her neck, and, nestling her head on that loving bosom, there her uplifted, joyous face felt the large tear which fell from her mother's eyes.

The father's heart was touched ; though he

tried to speak cheerfully, yet his voice trembled a little as he said—

“Let that be the last, Clara. I have often seen you turn away with a glistening eye when you have sympathized where you might not relieve; and I never remarked your emotion without pain and regret. But, as you just said, it was a point of principle with me. I need not dwell on that subject, though; you know all that I can tell you. Now for the new maxim.”

“Oh, I know,” exclaimed the boy. “I know what mamma will choose. May I guess? Won’t it be ‘Charity never faileth’?”

“Yes, my love; but we will begin with papa’s favourite words, for they must be remembered too; and this shall be our motto—‘Charity begins at home, and never faileth.’”

“Excellent!” answered the father. “Which of my children can give me the best reason for retaining the words, ‘Charity begins at home’?”

“I know one reason, papa,” answered

Anna. "The beginning is the root, as it were; and at home is the heart; so when we say, 'Charity begins at home,' we mean it must spring up in the heart. Mamma told me so long ago; and she says that charity springs in many hearts, without afterwards attaining to growth of any important size; because human nature is capable of some kindly emotions; but adversity, or prosperity, or business, or pleasures, or something generally interferes to divert the mind from objects that are totally apart from self-interest. But mamma says, 'Good fruits are produced when charity takes root in a Christianized heart that has devoted itself to God, and has been accepted.' Mamma says it springs up at first a very feeble plant, which only the Christian's eye can detect; perhaps in the shape of a tender excuse for the failing of a little sister or brother, or in a firm silence, when something tempts us to speak unkindly; but generally in trifles of one sort or another occurring amongst those who are nearest and dearest to *us*, or with whom we most frequently associate.

Then mamma says, if we cultivate that feeling, and pray to God to increase its growth, it will spread further and further, beyond the hearth and beyond the home, beyond the village and beyond Christ's Church, till at last it spreads over all the world ; its boughs laden with Christian hopes and sympathies, with prayers, and Bibles, and gold to the poor heathen, ever shedding its healing leaves hither and thither, wherever there is need to soothe, to sympathize, or to administer kindness of any sort. Oh, papa, mamma says if there were more charity there would be less discord, and its fruits would adorn the doctrine of the gospel, for we cannot produce them except by strictly adhering to the means which the gospel alone teaches."

The little girl felt warmly on the subject, and her fervour inspired her with confidence ; with each word she uttered her earnestness increased, her cheeks glowed, and her eyes glistened. Then suddenly she stopped, the bright colour spread from her cheeks all over her ample forehead ; her eyelids tremblingly

lowered themselves till their long, dark fringes rested on her burning cheeks, and, at last, gliding up to her father, she hid her face on his shoulder, saying, in a low tone as she did so,

“But, papa, I am afraid I have been saying a great deal too much for a little girl.”

“I will excuse you even if you have, Anna, this time; and will, moreover, give you credit for having learned your lesson very well. Nay, is not that sufficient?” he added; playfully raising her face and kissing it; “then I will say too, and you have had a very good teacher! But one word more; its fruits—tell me more clearly what are they.”

“The good works which, with God’s blessing, are produced by the principle of charity in the heart. The visits to the fatherless and the widow in their affliction. The prayer for the ignorant and the effort to impart knowledge—the full, free, hearty forgiveness—all these things are the fruits of charity; and I will tell you why I think they are called fruits. I think for two reasons. One is,

because the fruit is the part of the tree that contains the seed, and the seed is the part that reproduces of the same kind ; and this is so with our good works. When I do a kindness to anyone, that kindness leaves a little tender feeling, of a kind nature too, in the heart of the person benefited. If that heart be only human, not Christian, in its state, perhaps that little seed will never grow ; but only God knows. We must cheerfully sow, and leave the result to Him. If that heart be a renewed heart, there is no knowing how that little seed may spring up and live, and grow, and produce, and reproduce—perhaps twenty, perhaps fifty, perhaps a hundred fold. Oh, I think that is such a nice thought, papa. When I feel sorry I can only do such little things for people, I like to think of the little seeds, and the great, great trees that grow from them.”

“ Very well ! Now the second reason, my little philosopher.”

“ No, no, papa ; don’t call me philosopher, or I shall think you are quizzing me. My

second reason is, that the Bible tells us to lay up treasures for ourselves in Heaven, where neither rust nor moth doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. In another part, it says we must bear fruit. You know where I mean. There are a great many parts about it ; but I like the fifteenth chapter of St. John the best, because it is so delightful to think of those words, ‘ Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit ; so shall ye be my disciples.’ It seems such a wonderful joy ! to think that *we* can help to ‘ glorify God :’ it makes one feel that if any one but Jesus had said so, we might not dare to believe it ! Oh ! I think that last part of the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew is the grandest thing I ever read in any book. I never think of it without fancying I see the King and all the holy angels, and the crowd of righteous on his right hand ; and that I hear Him saying, ‘ Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world ; for I was an hungred, and

ye gave Me meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink : I was a stranger, and ye took Me in : naked, and ye clothed Me : I was sick, and ye visited Me : I was in prison, and ye came unto Me'—and then the voices of the righteous, humbly asking *when* had they done these things ; followed by his loving answer, which reveals infinite sympathy with the wretchedness of all people :—‘ Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me.’ This agrees with what St. Paul says in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians—I think it is in the tenth verse of the fifth chapter—‘ For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.’ So, don’t you think, papa, it seems that remembrance of our Christian charities is kept in Heaven ; and if so, that fact explains the verse, ‘ Lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven ;’ and those treasures are the ‘ much fruit, whereby God is glorified.’ ”

“Yes, Anna, I do think so, decidedly,” said her father.

“There is one significant point in our Saviour’s description of the judgment that awaits us, which you do not seem to have noticed, Anna,” said her mother; “God, in his infinite power, doubtless, could work without agents, if it pleased Him to do so; but, from the period of man’s first transgression, down to the present time (a close inspection of God’s Word justifies us in believing), He invariably has employed, and still employs, visible and invisible instruments wherewith He works his sovereign will with regard to each member of the human family. Men and angels are alike the servants of the Most High; and as it pleases God at many times to minister to man’s wants, by the means of his holy angels, so we are told what the work of the angels *is now*, and what their work, and what their position at the great judgment day, *will be* also. To which of the angels said He, at any time, ‘Sit on my right hand, until I make *thine* enemies thy footstool?’ Are they not

all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation. I should like you to read the first and second chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews carefully, and to compare them with other revelations on this subject. I want you thoroughly to digest the fact that, though angels minister to God's children on earth, they do so only in obedience to God's word. They are zealous for God's glory. When Herod, 'arrayed in royal apparel,' sat upon his throne, and made an oration, and the people gave a shout, saying, 'It is the voice of a god, and not of a man,' immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory, and he was eaten of worms, and he gave up the ghost' (Acts xii.) Angels do not receive adoration or prayers (See Rev. xxii. 8). 'And I John saw these things and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren

the prophets, and of them that keep the sayings of this book. Worship God.'

"I would have you, my dear children, ever bear these two verses in mind—so shall 'no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels.' It is one of the great dangers of the present day. Meet the question of who and what the angels are with answers from the Word of God only, and you are safe; you may then derive all the comfort our Saviour meant to impart when He spake such words as these: 'Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in Heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in Heaven' (Matt. xviii. 10); and also Luke xv. 10, 'Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.' They are not allowed to mediate between God and man; to wish them to do so would impugn the infinite love of God the Father, and of Christ our Saviour. 'For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the

man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.' And in St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, it is written, ' Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities ; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.' "

We have no authority for believing that the holy angels guard us in the dark valley of the shadow of death. Christ has trodden that vale ; but we are told the angels are immortal. Yet, when all the troubles of life are ended, and the believer falls asleep in Jesus, there is a sweet consolation for bereaved friends in recalling the words, " And the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." Mind, it was after he died, when the spirit left its earthly abode, the immortal

being was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom.

From the parable of Lazarus, you may learn that God does not always permit angels to work out man's relief. In this case, He laid the responsibility on "the rich man," and the death of the poor man was laid to his account. In the history of our Lord, there were occasions when the angels were permitted to minister unto Him ; but in his last agonies He was left alone—voluntarily left alone. Observe his words, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels."

"Now, Alfred, can you tell me why He did not pray for them?"

"Yes, mamma, Jesus told the reason. He said, 'But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?' I am quite sure no man would have dared to crucify the Son of God, if even one of the holy angels had appeared by his side."

"No," exclaimed Anna, "but after the

Scriptures were fulfilled, mamma, God let the angel of the Lord descend from Heaven, and roll back the stone from the door of our Saviour's tomb, and be the first to say, 'He is risen!'

"Yes, Anna, and the angel of the Lord was the first to proclaim the Saviour's birth," replied her brother, "and, immediately after, there was with the angel a multitude of the Heavenly host, praising God, and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men.'"

"I do like to think of these things, mamma," said Anna, earnestly. "It makes one long so to be really amongst the angels, and to serve God as earnestly and as joyfully as they do. I don't know how it is with us, mamma—at least with me; I like all that is good so much, and I feel so earnest sometimes. And yet—and yet I don't know, mamma, how to tell you what I mean; I ought not to say I can't serve God in that way; because I know you would say I could, if I availed myself of God's help. Well, I

want to do right always, yet never can do so long at once."

"That feeling, my love, is one good impression the Almighty intended the accounts given of angels in the Bible to make on the hearts of men. The grief which you express has been felt by many people who really loved God. David felt it, and St. Paul, and, in fact, I think every real Christian must feel it; but I trust you will ultimately be able to rejoice as St. Paul did, even in that very infirmity, feeling how sweet it is to derive your strength from God. God will make you 'more than conqueror' if you depend on Him."

"It is getting later than your usual bedtime, my children," said their father; "but while these subjects are before us I should like you to take two more steps in pursuit of the tasks of angels, and then one more on our former subject of conversation. Your mother has shown you that man shares the sympathizing interest of the angels, and at times derives benefit from their active, though unseen service rendered at God's command. Our Saviour

has revealed something even beyond this. Can either of you tell me what it is? What are angels to do 'at the end of the world'?"

"I know, papa," said Alfred. "The angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just."

"Just so; that is why your mamma said there was something more—signified by the mention of the holy angels coming with the Son of God to judge mankind—than Anna seemed to observe."

"I see, papa; you mean, that as angels see us now, and mourn or rejoice over our sorrows or our well-being, and as they bear away the departed believers to their place of rest, God lets them at the last have the happiness of leading them into the presence of their Judge, and of hearing Him say to them, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'"

"Yes, and in their turn too, the believers are to derive at least a particle of their fulness of joy, from the fact that their names are confessed 'before the Father, and before his

angels.'” (See Rev. iii. 5, and several parts of the gospels.)

“Now, Anna, I think you are pretty clear on these subjects. I only want to ask you one question respecting these fruits, by which God is glorified—do you think you can obtain salvation by them?”

“Oh, no, dear papa,” answered the girl firmly, and very seriously, “we must be in Christ before we can do these things, as mamma often tells us, the seeds won’t grow up in the natural heart; but if we abide in Christ, and Christ in us, then we are sure to bear fruit, and that fruit is only the proof that we ‘belong to the true vine.’ And God will let us be saved, not because of the fruit, but because of our inseparable union with his dear Son, Jesus Christ our Saviour.”

“Quite right, my child; and I hope you will always cherish this doctrine in your heart, and live up to it. Now I will tell you what happened to-day, and led me to make the resolutions I have expressed this night. On my way to the Hall this morning, I observed

by the wayside an old man and a little boy; the latter, as I approached, sprang forward and held out his cap soliciting relief. I passed on as usual without affording even a reply. This afternoon, just as I was preparing to leave my office, a messenger came to me from the housekeeper to say she wished to see me before I returned home. Judge of my surprise when I learned from her that the old man whom I passed in the morning was Henry Unwin, formerly tenant of the Holme Farm, and his little companion was the orphan he took with him when he went to the south with his son. She said the young ladies had taken them to her room for rest and refreshment; they had spent an hour or two there, and then proceeded to Hill-top Farm, feeling confident of being well received. The housekeeper, after their departure, took an opportunity to tell the young ladies how well she had known and how much every one had felt for the old man years ago; and she had told them too, of the report about Lucy going to be married; so before I came away they entered the room to

tell me they had obtained their father's permission to instruct me to offer the new Lodge to George, that there might be no difficulty about him finding a home for his intended wife ; and they said too that if the young people would let the little boy live with them, he should have employment in the Hall gardens. I can't tell you, Clara, what I felt ! The privilege and the blessing of showing such a man kindness might have been mine ; but instead of that, I added to his portion of sorrow. However, I shall do my best now to make him amends, and to-morrow I will see George about the Lodge. It is quite ready now for entering into ; and certainly it would not be easy to find another couple so thoroughly desirable for residents as he and Lucy are."

"Poor Henry ! I remember him very well, and have often spoken to the children about him and his family when we have passed the Holme. When my father was agent he always felt much interest in him," said Mrs. Melville.

"Yes, I am aware of it; they grew up together, and knew each other, as I knew his children. Well, after this lesson, I would rather throw away assistance to twenty impostors than heartlessly withhold it from one man like him."

"Papa;" said the boy, "I have often thought you were right about not giving alms indiscriminately, for one reason, and now this one instance puzzles me very much; for I can hardly reconcile the idea of a good man being destitute of things necessary to the body's health and comfort, though he might be without luxuries. You know David said, 'I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.'"

His father remained silent a minute. How often had the same words served to set at rest any slight remonstrance his conscience sometimes had whispered, as he had passed by the poor "on the other side."

"My dear boy," said his mother, "who is righteous?"

Silence again followed this inquiry, and then the boy replied, "Oh, I know what you mean; the Bible says over and over again, 'There is none righteous, no, not one.' But then why does David speak as though he had known men that were?"

"Reach the Bible, my dear boy, and give it to me. There, now read this part of the third chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, from the tenth verse."


The boy read:—"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that what things soever

the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law : that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight : for by the law is the knowledge of sin.' ”

“ Wait a minute, my boy. Observe, now, ‘ all the world ’ as ‘ guilty before God. ’ Do you remember the words of St. James, the second chapter and tenth verse, ‘ For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all ’ ? We may well wonder when we read these things, and can scarcely refrain from exclaiming with the disciples, ‘ Who then can be saved ? ’ or, as you worded it just now, ‘ Where, then, can we find the righteous man whose position towards God, the Psalmist so strongly describes ? ’ ”

“ ‘ With men this is impossible, but with God, all things are possible. ’ ”

“ Now, see. When ‘ every mouth is stopped before God ; ’ when no man can come forward and declare himself holy before God ; the blessed gospel sounds, declaring ‘ Christ’s



righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.' Go on reading from the twenty-first verse."

"'But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.'"

"Now, what can you gather from all this?"

Anna replied, "I think, mamma, that every one in the world must be wicked in God's sight; but some hear of the righteous-

ness of Christ, *and want it*. They read the Bible, and get more and more courage to ask for it ; and God watches them all the while. He knows when they believe, and when they pray ; and in his mercy He does freely impute Christ's righteousness to every believer. Whether sins past be many or few, or great, or small, I think Christ's righteousness is made *to cover all*."

"That is just it, my dear girl ; and to my mind this answer meets your brother's difficulty. Let us apply it, that you may see how it does so. We remember old Henry, years ago. He was an industrious, steady man ; an honest and kind neighbour ; a good husband and father. Men respected him, though his station in life was lowly. He was exemplary in his attendance at church, and refrained from profane language during his daily labours. But God sees the heart and sees the hand. Is not it just possible that, when God had blessed the farmer's household, the blessing was prized, but the Giver of the blessing received no grateful return ? Is

it not possible that, while much of the outward conduct was moral and good, much of the inward heart required to be cleansed by the Holy Spirit? Is it not possible that dark spots of sin marred the man's morality, and made it needful for him, as it is for every one, to lay hold on Christ's righteousness? What if he knew it not? God spoke. His hand withdrew blessings it had bestowed. God knew the result of each chastening stroke. His Fatherly love never inflicts one stripe more than is needful for the salvation of the soul. I trust that if we were to converse with Henry now, he would tell us that each affliction has drawn him a little nearer to his God. Perhaps now he enjoys frequent and close communion with his Heavenly Father; often experiencing the comfort of the Holy Spirit, and feeling in his heart truly thankful that all the objects, around which his affections perhaps clung too closely, have been so removed, that there is nothing left for him to lay hold of as support but the gospel, and the God who gave it."

“Mamma, I think you are right. I shall always be afraid of passing any one again who seems destitute, without giving relief if I can ; or at least speaking a kind word, lest I should neglect some unhappy fellow-creature in whom *God is working*, to draw him to Heaven.”

The boy could not trust himself to say more. His lip quivered, and he looked down on his drawing-board, endeavouring to hide his emotion.

“My dear children, let us apply this one point to our own hearts. Neither you nor I are safe until the righteousness of Christ clothes us. Oh ! delay not to implore for it earnestly, until you feel that your past sins are forgiven. We will pay Henry a visit in a day or two, to inquire concerning his health and prospects. Now, Anna, love, ring the bell for prayers.”

In a few minutes the sweet sounds of praise to God were heard in that neatly arranged and comfortable room, as the voices of the domestics blended harmoniously with the voices of the family ; and the solemn words of

an evening hymn prepared their minds to receive with due reverence the inspired Word of God, which was afterwards read by the head of the household, before they all bent the knee in prayer to their Heavenly Father.

CHAPTER V.

GOD IS GOOD.

FOUR o'clock! The welcome sound steals across the dark surface of the river that glides along the valley. It floats 'mid the fragrant air, hovering beneath the still, blue sky; lingering on the cultured hills, and passing more swiftly across the plain where green fields stretch afar, and the mellow crops of grain wave in the sunshine, gracefully bending beneath each passing breeze. Four o'clock! Hark! The welcome hour is hailed with a shout by the reapers.


Slowly treading on the stiff unyielding stubble, Lucy approached the great oak-tree, under the far-spread branches of which, the labourers and their families were gathering together. In her left hand she carried a small

basket, while Henry leaned on her right arm, and little Edward walked beside them. Unobserved they reached the sheltering tree, and stood amidst the pleasant "hum" of glad voices; but, as Lucy's father held forth his hand to receive the basket, one and all, the labourers, sprang on their feet, and in turns grasped the old man's willing hands, while he vainly tried to acknowledge with thanks the kind words of cordial welcome which greeted his return.

In nut-brown ale the old man's health was drank, and cheers loud and long rang in the air.

When the excitement that prevailed for a few minutes had died away, Lucy sat down amongst the rest under the tree. Edward was soon merry with playfellows of his own age, and the old man found one or two who could talk with him of "sixty years ago."

It is pleasant to be in the corn-fields when the weary reapers lay down their sickles and partake of their humble repast; whilst children seek amongst the stubble, the full ear of



ripe grain, and young mothers stand by, some smiling on the merry little ones that run past them, others lulling to slumber the infants folded in their arms, or playfully trying to win for the Father, that smile of dawning love which their babe is just learning to bestow.

But the half hour of rest is soon sped ; the strong arm resumes the sickle, and young women bind the sheaves. Edward joins a group of juvenile gleaners, and Henry finds that his oldest acquaintance intends to accompany him back to the farm : so Lucy starts alone on her homeward journey, but is soon overtaken by her friend George, who, with a beaming countenance, explains to her, that having news to impart which was too good to keep until evening, he had been looking out for her return from the field to tell it to her.

“ What do you think, Lucy ? The young ladies at the Hall have obtained their father’s permission to desire the agent to offer us the new Lodge ; and they will take Edward into their own service if he may live with us. How this all happens I can hardly tell ; but Mr.

Melville says it is partly through the interest they take in Henry, and partly owing to the housekeeper mentioning the prospect of our marriage, and the difficulty we were in about getting a house. But what do you say to it, Lucy?"

A bright smile was Lucy's only answer.

"Then I shall accept it, and we are at liberty to apply for the key any day. You will see I shall not lose any time till I get it snugly furnished; then, Lucy, you will fulfil your promise? And who will be so happy as I?"

Perhaps, if Lucy had been less bashful, she would have repeated that smallest of the pronouns; as it was, the echo died in her heart without rising to her lips.

For once, no envy followed the recipients of a mark of favour; when the news spread that little Edward was to be employed by the young ladies, and to live in the Lodge, with Lucy and George. And when the church bells were ringing merrily one sunny morning in the month of October, the ancient little

place of worship was thronged with well-wishers for the youthful couple.

That night Henry was Lucy's guest, and shared little Edward's chamber.

And again the little orphan laid his hand on his grandfather's arm, and repeated,

"Grandfather, you are right. God is good. I hope I shall always trust Him for the time to come."

And again angels heard those simple words of praise, and could repeat "God is good."

And again they knew the human medium through which the help had flowed, that elicited the holy fervour of God's child. And they regarded those sisters with good will for the kindly deed, and whilst those in Heaven rejoiced at the sounds of repentance, those on earth, gentle girls, were watching you. Congregated, may they at God's bidding, as his servants, guard your feet, that from the steps of virtue you may ascend to the path of religion, no longer treading solitarily the path of your mortal life, but, by faith, walking with God in the only way which leads to Heaven.

Yes, angels wondered not, that voices which education had refined to the melodious tones of pure politeness, should be heard in tender accents : they deemed it not strange, that out of their abundance the wealthy should administer to a fellow-creature's want, and by doing so, gratify *a natural disposition* to pity.

CHAPTER VI.

A DROOPING BLOSSOM.

DAYS passed on, and angels, whose deeds are all to the praise and to the glory of God, saw the young girls endeavouring to promote the comforts of the venerable man, and of his now happy boy ; and anxiously those spirits watched, eager to see the works of kindness dedicated unto that Saviour, who alone can make any human service acceptable unto the Father.

But no. The object of charity was not the object of prayer ; the work of *sympathy* was not the work of *grace* ; and sorrowing, the angels turn away. What have they to record ? The deed was not to the glory of God ; but such, as of men shall have reward.

And as the angels remember that human

reward awaits the sisters, they cast once more a lingering look on the earth. And behold a child prays. And the angels see the simple earnestness of the boy, and they draw near and they hear these words:—

“Father in Heaven, I am still a helpless child; I cannot do anything for them in return for their kindness. Do Thou reward them. I am not fit to ask this favour, but grant it me, for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.”

And the angels saw the infirm “hands of age” lifted towards Heaven, and they knew another heart was desiring the blessing of God might descend on the youthful friends of the poor. And widows that night mingled their prayers, that the hands might be blessed which had ministered to the latest wants of their departed husbands.

Then the angels sped towards Heaven with joy; and even as they reached those blissful realms, they heard the Saviour’s voice reply, “Inasmuch as they have done it unto one of *the* least of these, they have done it unto Me.”

Then they knew that He who had withheld from the orphan other blessings, was pleased with the trustful prayer, and would grant the request so disinterested in its nature, so pure from its source. Yet what blessing, what reward, could be given to those whose position in life was so happy already?

* * * * *

The angel of the Lord was sent forth to smite. The bloom of health was wiped off the youthful cheek. The touch was gentle; and help was sought from the learned. But vain was the physician's skill.

While her fond sister clung with the tenacity of despair to Mary, while the poor drooping one herself leaned hopefully on every human succour, the only hand powerful to save was not sought by them until too late. And God and his holy angels alone recognized in the affliction, the answer to the prayers of the orphan and of widows, which, multiplied, daily were ascending to his throne.

The weight of sickness presses more heavily. No longer that once elastic step is seen bounding over the green sward. No longer that musical laughter resounds merrily through the air.

Hand in hand the sisters had for sixteen summers culled each joy, that in their atmosphere of love and affluence seemed to grow spontaneously around them.

But why *now* should Alice's hand be outstretched for the once loved flowers, when Mary's brow no longer wears them? Why *now* should her lips be the rosy wreaths of pleasure, when her smiles can no more restore gladness to the heart of her companion?

Poor girls! fading as the gentle was—— Does the dew refuse to shine on the drooping blossom? Does God's Spirit cease to wash the tried and the afflicted? Sorrow leads the heart to God.



CHAPTER VII.

THE THUNDER STORM.

It was a hot day in the month of July; an intensely hot day. Not a leaf was stirring, not a flower bent its stem, for no breeze passed over the lovely garden.

The sisters were sitting in an arbour of evergreens. Pencils and paper and a small writing-case were on a table in the centre, and Mary was listlessly turning over the leaves of an album, glancing at fragments of manuscript verse.

"I want you to copy the lines you have just written about the wood-sorrel, Ally," she said. "Write them on this pink page; and I will paint a group of your favourites above the lines. I wonder, Ally, what puts such thoughts into your queer little head—I mean,

what makes you mingle serious thoughts with every glad thing. For instance, you wrote last spring—

‘I love the spring-time, when the violets bloom
Amid the new grass, finging sweet perfume ;
When countless daisies spring up from the sod,
Each seems to me a messenger from God.’

And so on. Now I could look at daisies all the summer through without ever thinking of them as ‘messengers’ to me.”

“Could you, dear Mary? Oh, I think not; you do yourself injustice, love. Everything seems to me to speak of God’s love; and everything here changes so—leaves us so soon—that I think we can’t help hearing God’s voice, as it were, telling us sweetly that ‘Heaven is our home,’ and that the passing things of beauty are but tokens of his love—earnests of better joys that will last for ever. They seem placed *here* to lure us *there*,” she added, pointing upwards; and then, with a sweet trustful smile, she said softly, “to our Heavenly Father.”

After a few minutes passed in silence,

Alice inquired, "Shall I copy the lines for you now, Mary, or would you rather go in? It is almost time for you to lie down."

"Oh, write them now, Ally," replied Mary, as she placed the album before her sister; "I am not tired. But the day is very sultry. I will read them while you transcribe, so we shall not be long."

She read the following lines:—

WOOD-SORREL.

"I'm a little woodland flower,
Born 'mid sunshine and 'mid shower;
So fair, so fragile, and so frail,
I dare not meet a wintry gale;
So, when it sweeps across the dell,
I meekly close my snowy bell,
And fold my triune leaves so green,
To form a safe and beauteous screen;
But, hopeful ever, lift my head
Soon as the sun's warm rays are spread.
And joyous children passing by
Oft look upon me lovingly.
For, though I am a tiny thing,
I'm floral herald of the spring.
They greet me as the cuckoo's choice,
Then listen for his pleasant voice.
They love to trace the veinings light
Pencilled on my corolla white.

They note my stem, so very slender,
Ready its services to render,
Erect, upholding to their view
My little cup half filled with dew.
They will not crush my leafy bed,
For tender pity marks their tread.
Then as they pass, and gently sigh,
I whisper softly,

‘Go, and try.

Go, help the weak to bear their burden ;
Go, earn the Christian’s noble guerdon.
Oh, let thy earnest effort be
To do the work God gives to thee.
Go, little children, learn from me,
Whene’er you feel adversity,
To wait in patience, and to know
Thy Maker bids the wind to blow.
There is a triune God o’er thee ;
Oh, be his love thy canopy.
Hide from the storm, and rest secure ;
Thy God shall keep thee, scathless, pure ;
And when his Word thy cares shall chase,
Oh, lift to Him thy tearful face,
And in the griefs which have been thine
Will glisten rays of love divine.
The dew falls fast in night’s dark hours,
Strengthening, refreshing summer flowers.
So sorrow and God’s love combined
Are life’s best blessing thou wilt find.

‘Up I spring from leaves like clover,
But far more delicate and light,

When the winter's winds are over,
And plenteous falls the dew at night,
On banks of moss, 'neath hedges green,
In sun, in shade, I'm often seen.
Looking upward, spotless, lowly ;
Ripening surely, ripening slowly.

'Then, so do thou, in joyous hour,
Rise, strong in newly given power ;
Lift heart and eye, to God above thee ;
Thus, do thy work ;—He will approve thee.
Although thy very "will" be slender,
Although the service thou canst render
To God or man be e'er so small,
A Father's love accepts it all.' "

"There ! now I've done !" said Alice. "I wonder if it is really poetry. I wish I knew. I mean I am afraid I only write a jingle from ear. I know nothing about the rules. How I wish I could write verse properly."

"Proper or not proper, they please me, Ally ; and no one who knows you will be inclined to criticise them very severely."

"Then I shall never improve," replied Alice, archly.

"Yes, you will. Practice makes perfect, you know. Shall we go in now? I really

think there will be thunder to-day ; the atmosphere is so oppressive I can scarcely breathe."

She spoke wearily ; and with pain Alice contrasted the languor of her sister's manner with the brightness of her eye, and the brilliant colour on the upper part of her cheeks.

"The day is very close, Mary ; still I think you are scarcely safe without shawl or hat ; and see !—you are not a bad prophetess—that is certainly a thunder-cloud. We shall have heavy rain directly. I wish we were not so far from the house."

Even as she spoke, a large rain-drop fell heavily on the steps of the arbour ; a second, and a third. The girls rose hurriedly. Alice wrapped the shawl closely around her sister, and looked, as she felt, uneasy.

A distant peal of thunder ! The dark clouds rolling up rapidly from the horizon, and threatening to overhang the spot on which they stood, filled the girls with alarm. The great rain-drops became numerous now ; each one distinct, slanting, and striking the earth with a sharp sound.

"What shall we do, Mary? This arbour is no shelter from a thunder-storm; and yet—your shoes are so thin, and you are so unfit for a run—I don't see how we are to reach the house without incurring the risk, of you taking cold."

"A thorough wetting, or to remain here with the lightning flashing in our eyes, and these terrible peals of thunder rolling overhead! Of two evils choose the least, which is the first, doubtless." Mary spoke thus, trying to make light of their dilemma, because she knew that it was on her account that Alice felt so anxious.

Passing their arms around each other's waists, the girls stepped forth; but in the instant their feet touched the gravel walk, a vivid flash of lightning drove them back involuntarily. For a moment each girl pressed a hand across her eyes, and neither spoke, but closer and closer they drew towards each other, till the crash and long succeeding peal of thunder died away. Now the rain poured in torrents; yet the frightened girls rushed

forth, vainly hoping to reach home before another shock. But the storm burst forth in all its fury ; flash after flash, peal after peal, and the light of day was obscured by the dense black cloud that hung like a pall over all the country. Here and there, the blackness seemed as though fire were burning behind it ; and beneath such places, a strange light rested, contrasting the objects on which it fell, with the gloom that prevailed elsewhere.

“I wish we were from under the trees,” said Mary, glancing up at the overhanging branches. “Oh what a flash !” She shuddered, and stood still. Crash ! crash ! crash ! The trunk of a fine oak-tree which stood alone in the centre of a large lawn on their right hand side, was struck ; large boughs were hurled a considerable distance, and the whole of the tree was cleft from top to bottom : then the electric fluid, for an instant, played on the green turf below, as if in sportive mockery.

All colour had long since fled from the faces of the terrified girls ; but Mary’s limbs now trembled so violently, it was with the

greatest difficulty that Alice could support her.

"Mary, dear Mary; for my sake, try to keep up, love; one little run, and we shall be safe! But you *can't*, my poor sister!"

"My children!" exclaimed a voice which made Alice's heart jump for joy.

"Oh, papa!"

"Run! run! Alice."

And the father raised his insensible girl in his arms, and carried her home, as though she had been but an infant.

Little recked they, of that household then, how the storm raged on; for there was one who heard it not; neither knew anything of the tender love and care of those anxious friends, who were endeavouring to restore her to consciousness.

Wealth purchases not immunity from sickness, from sorrow, or from death.

And hours passed before the medical attendant was able to relieve the anxious parents, by pronouncing their child to be out of immediate danger.

Oh, death ! Well is it for man that thou art robbed of thy sting : for thou art cruel ! Mocking with the touch of thy finger when thou meanest not to take ! And bearing away in thine hand when thou hast not beckoned !

Mary was spared. * * * *

But another, a little messenger of mercy, was taken away !

In the same hour that the sisters were sitting in the arbour, little Anna accompanied her mother to the cottage of a poor widow, whose son had for many months been confined to his bed, with a complaint which would leave him a cripple for life. She took with her a small sum of money, pocket-money which she had saved weekly out of her little allowance, on purpose to supply him with a pair of crutches ; and while her mother was talking to the widow, the little girl sat down by the boy's humble bed, and drew from her pocket a book of illustrated Bible stories : then, holding the volume in such a manner that he could see the pages, she turned over leaf after leaf, speaking to him in a low voice of the

persons and of the occurrences, the pictures represented.

It was a *small* act of kindness, but it afforded to the weary child, a *great* and a lasting pleasure.

In his lonely hours afterwards, the pictures seemed to come back to him to bear him company, and with them returned many of the simple words which Anna had so kindly spoken.

When the widow had closed the cottage-door after the departure of her visitors, she returned to her boy to ask him how he felt. There was a look of pleasure over his pale face, such as she had not seen for a long while, as he answered—

“ Oh, so well, mother, so happy.”

“ How childlike Miss Anna is. Jesus said, ‘ Suffer little children to come unto Me, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven.’ Suffer them to come means let them come, Miss Anna said.”

He placed his emaciated little hands in his mother's, and raised his dark, earnest eyes to

meet her look of love. Earnestly, very earnestly, he looked for at least a minute : and the smile left his face. And the worn look, so unlike a child's look, came back to it again, as he said softly—

“Mother, would it grieve you to let *me* go ?”

The mother tremblingly pressed the small thin hands in her own. She tried to be calm. But, oh !—her one child,—her boy of only seven summers.—A great fear came upon her. It crushed her heart :—that weight of agony ! And bursting into a flood of tears, she exclaimed—

“Oh, my child ! May God, in his mercy, spare me that trial.”

“Don't cry, dear mother,” said the boy, tenderly, “I don't think Jesus will take me away, if you don't like. For Miss Anna showed me another picture, of Jesus raising a widow's son to life again, because He was sorry her only son had died.”

And Jesus did *not* take away the lame boy from his widowed mother !

But little, that poor boy and his weeping parent knew, how soon little *Anna's* invitation would reach her. How soon *she* would be called to her eternal home !

When the little girl and her mother left the cottage, they noticed the threatening clouds, and hurried home. The first heavy drops of rain which they perceived, fell on their doorsteps as they entered their house ; and they cheerfully congratulated each other on their timely arrival in safety.

Anna laid their bonnets and mantles by ; then rejoining her mother in their pleasant sitting-room, and finding her already occupied with needlework, the child again drew her little book out of her pocket ; and as the gloom which foreboded the impending storm deepened, she carried a little chair across the room, and sat by the window.

Calm and undisturbed she heard the awful voice of the thunder, and saw the lightning's glare. The rain fell in torrents ; every walk became the channel of a muddy stream, and

it pleased the girl to watch those things of but momentary existence, the great bubbles which rose, floated, and were gone ! Gone ! but their places filled by others of similar destiny. Little thought the child, they were emblems of her own young life !

“I am glad, mamma, that we paid our visit before the storm came on. Poor Willie was so pleased with the pictures, especially with this of Jesus blessing little children, he repeated the words—‘Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven’—over and over again ; and I promised to go again, if you would let me, and to teach him ‘Gentle Jesus, meek and mild.’ I think it is so pretty—

‘Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look upon a little child,
Pity my simplicity,
Suffer me to come to Thee.’ ”

Anna bent over the pages of her book as she concluded the verse ; but at the same instant there was a flash of lightning so in-

tensely vivid, followed immediately by such a deafening peal of thunder, that her mother, startled for the child's safety, looked up from her work to assure herself of it.

To attempt to speak before the sound died away, would have been useless, so she waited a moment—but a moment—yet too long !

“ Anna, my love, you are in a dangerous place ; come by me.”

The child arose. But late, too late, was the mother's call ! Another flash. The child staggered, sank on the floor ! Not a cry—not a sound, save one deafening clap of thunder, followed by the low wail of a mother's agony, as she raised her stricken daughter. Then all was still.

The last line of the simple verse, “ Suffer me to come to Thee,” had been wafted on high. And a voice said, “ Come !” “ The messenger was made a flame of fire.” “ And angels carried ” her “ into Abraham's bosom.”

There are griefs which neither pen nor tongue can depict. Over such, let a veil fall

gently, and silence offer its tribute of sympathy.

Sorrow, deep, universal sorrow hung over the village of Lytton ; and none felt for the bereaved parents and brother more acutely, than did the family at the " Hall." But there was one of that home-circle, to whom no one had ventured to communicate the fact of Anna's death. Mary alone remained ignorant of it.

CHAPTER VIII.

FAREWELL.

THE fourth morning dawned, a glorious outburst of sunshine flooded both mountain and valley; a glorious stream of melody rang through the groves and plantations, as the rejoicing birds poured forth their sweetest songs. But the darkness of affliction hung like night, over the hearts of the mourners.

Sorrowing, Anna's mother sat by the remains of her darling child; shrinking from the moment which she knew was near, when the last kiss must be imprinted on that fair brow; and the last, indelible impression of the calm face, on the minds of the bereaved, must seal their remembrance of her.

And the father stood there too; and the

weeping brother. And the father sorrowed ; but his sorrow was divided : for he looked on the gentle companion of so many years, as well as on the peaceful features of his darling daughter. He looked on her tearless eyes, and pressed her slender fingers, which trembled not, but were cold as those of the dear dead. He raised her drooping head, and drew it to his manly breast. Still she was only passive in his arms.

“ Clara, love, Clara ! ” But she seemed not to hear him.

“ Clara ! for my sake, love ! ” Dreamily she looked at him.

“ For my sake, love. Try to look up ! ” A strange smile crept over the lips of his poor wife—a strange, nervous affection of the muscles of the face, told how hard was the struggle going on within. The first flood of tears since her child’s death came to her relief. She twined her arms around her husband’s neck, and sobbed.

“ For your sake——”

The worst was over, and in their hearts

the husband, and the son thanked their Heavenly Father.

"One parting kiss, dear Clara. They wait below." She knew what he meant. The last moment had come.

"Sweet child! sweet child!" said the father, in a low, broken voice.

"Sweet sister," sobbed the boy, as he gave a last kiss, and laid a white rose on her bosom.

But the mother pressed her lips on that cold face in silence. Her husband supported, and led her into another room, and said, softly—

"The Sun of Righteousness shall arise, with healing on his wings."

"He has arisen, dearest. Your words were the first ray—'for my sake.'"

Her husband left her. His great fear removed. Then, alone, and on her knees, she opened her heart to receive the Divine Light. It streamed into her soul, and warmed and comforted her. * * * *

The sisters were in their dressing-room. Mary, looking through the window, suddenly interrupted her mamma and Alice, who were conversing together, by exclaiming,

“Mamma, the close carriage is passing through the garden gates, and all the venetians are shut. Where is Wilding driving to?”

Instead of answering her child directly, the lady turned towards a middle-aged waiting woman, who entered at that instant, bringing with her two broad sashes of black silk, and two rice-straw bonnets, trimmed with white crape.

“Lay them on the bed, nurse, with white muslin dresses, for the young ladies,” she said.

“Black sashes, mamma !” exclaimed Mary. Little agitated the girl in her delicate state of health, and she became very pale as she asked, “Who is dead?”

“Mary, dear, try to be calm ; there is sad news ; you should have known it sooner, but all of us shrank from telling you. It cannot

be concealed much longer. Oh, Mary, we have much to thank God for. You and Alice were spared, but another, equally loved elsewhere, is taken away."

"Mamma! oh, tell me!" She sank into an easy-chair, trembling with emotion.

"Can you bear it, love?"


"Suspense is worse, I think."

The mother drew her child's head towards her, as she bent over the chair, and passed her hand gently across her glossy hair several times in silence, before she said—

"Have you noticed Mr. Melville's absence from the Hall, since the day of the storm?"

"Oh, mamma, he is not ——. Is he dead?"

"No, my child, he is not; but one is who was very dear to him. Mary, dear, we all have said it was wonderful our frail girls were preserved to us, when the mighty oak-tree standing so near to them was destroyed. You were safe, though unprotected save by a good Providence. But the fairest flower that grew in Lytton or its neighbourhood, enjoying the



belief of safety, in the shelter of home, was swept away."

"Oh, how dreadful! You mean Anna, Anna! Poor little Anna."

The girl dragged out the words in one long gasping breath; coldness and trembling crept over her; one or two low sobs were half repressed as they heaved her chest; but at length tears forced their way from under her closed eyelids, and trickled slowly down her face. Alice and her mother wept in anxious silence.

"Oh, mamma," murmured the poor invalid, "it is so very, very dreadful to die! and so young, and so much loved."

"Not dreadful for her, Mary, She lived in Christ, and they who do so, find at last, that 'to die is gain.'"

"But, mamma, to be struck by lightning!" Mary answered, with a shudder; and more and more freely flowed her tears.

"Poor little Anna had not felt any fear during the storm, love; she was sitting with Mrs. Melville in their parlour, interested in a

book of Scripture prints. The work of death was instantaneous; not a cry of pain, and not a mark is left by the fatal stroke. My child, take comfort in calling to mind our Saviour's words, 'Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.'"

"Yes, mamma; but it is so very, very dreadful!" * * * *

Weeks rolled by, and months, and Mrs. Melville herself seemed to be restored to her wonted calmness. Not that the memory of her darling passed away; but rather that the mother, in her frequent hours of solitude, was habituating herself to living over again her past life with her precious child. An hour of her *present*,—while her fingers mechanically plied the glistening needle, was spent by her mind, in enjoyment of "bygone associations."

But there were holier hours—hours in which a higher power than that of memory would suggest, not the *past*, but the *future*.

And then, the mother's heart was more truly comforted.

With Mary it was not so. She was struggling in secret with a great fear—the fear of death.

CHAPTER IX.

CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS.

"THE twenty-fourth of December, and no snow yet, or frost either!" said the elder of two boys, who were standing before a cheerful fire, waiting the entrance of the other members of the family. Preparations for breakfast were spread before them.

"I hope it won't last long like this, Harry, though; I long for some jolly skating this season," answered his brother.

"So do I; but after all, I am glad this morning is so mild, for aunt said Mary could not possibly come if the weather were at all severe. I wonder if we could just run across to the church before papa and mamma came down. I'd like to see if good fires have been kept up all night, and to feel if it's warm and

comfortable." The boy looked at his watch. "Oh, ten minutes! Come along, Charlie; I'll have you a race."

They left the hall door, bounded like hares down the gravelled walk, and cleared at a jump the little gate which opened into the burial ground. Once within these consecrated precincts, they walked quietly to the north door of the church. It was closed, but not locked. The boys took off their caps, and entered quietly. The first breath they drew, convinced them that their father's order had been faithfully attended to.

An elderly woman approached, and dropping a curtsey, said, "I think, sirs, you'll find it comfortable like, and fit for the young ladies, for we'd be sorry if they could not come. There's powers of evergreens, and many a basket of flowers been sent from the Hall, and one of the gardeners has just been and said the ladies will bring the camellias themselves. They've had as many as six hundred cut this morning. They'll be more plentiful even than they were last year."

"The more the better. I like lots of camellias, especially white ones, and lots of holly berries, they look so jolly against the laurel leaves," replied Charlie.

"So they do—but, my word! shan't we have to work like bees to get all this up before Christmas-Eve?"

"Well, the sooner we start the better. So let us be off to breakfast and back again as soon as possible. Thanks, Mrs. Evans; we'll tell mamma how warm the church feels, and you be good enough to mind the doors and the fires till the ladies come."

"I'll not neglect them, sir," answered the good woman, as once more she opened and closed the north entrance door.

It was about eleven o'clock when the carriage from the Hall stopped at the Rectory door, and the sisters stepped into the large, low, old-fashioned entrance-hall. It was paved with smooth flags, laid diagonally, and beautifully whitened. A large fire burned cheerfully in the wide grate; ferns and mosses grew in the deep recesses of the windows, and

against the walls were suspended family portraits of many generations. All the furniture was of richly-carved oak, as also were the pilasters and the frieze of the chimney-piece, in the centre of which was represented "The Infant Saviour, and the Wise Men worshipping Him." On the left hand of which was the "Baptism of our Lord in Jordan." On the right, "Angels ministering unto Christ after the Temptation in the Wilderness." And thus, on small panels, into which both pilasters and frieze were broken up, were represented various incidents of our Lord's life on earth : but its closing scene was more powerfully portrayed on canvass ; a masterly copy of "Rembrandt's Crucifixion" was suspended above the mantle-shelf.

As the girls entered, they were received by an elderly lady, who was mainly distinguished by the elegant simplicity, yet neatness of her dress ; the calm, yet highly intelligent expression of her countenance, and the easy grace of her carriage.

"I am very glad to see you, my dears.

All your cousins are at work in the church, but you must not think of joining them until you have warmed yourselves."

While speaking, she had affectionately embraced first Alice, then Mary, and retaining still the hand of the latter within her own, and looking at her with an expression of kind interest, she led her to the fire, saying, "I need not ask you, my love, how you are, for you always say, 'Quite well;' but it gives me pleasure to see that you really do look better."

"I am glad you think so, aunt, for indeed I feel quite strong to-day. This bit of sunshine is so cheering, it seems to do me good."

"It is very pleasant, certainly. But, Alice, what have we here?"

"Camellias, aunt; they are arranged in lace and collar-boxes. I think Wilding had better carry them to my cousins, in the church, without leaving them here at all, except two boxes, which we will keep, if you please—one for the Rectory decorations, and

one for Mary to use, for mamma desired me to tell you she thinks it will be better for her to work here chiefly, and to join us, not more than half an hour before luncheon, and about the same length of time after. She particularly wishes her to be in the house before four o'clock."

Mary smiled gently as Alice ceased speaking, and, looking at her aunt, observed—

"I am afraid it must be a great bore for an invalid to come amongst you all at such a busy time; but don't let me interfere with the arrangements of any one else. I shall be quite happy, aunt, in your little room; and there are some illuminated texts my sister and I have prepared, which are to be grounded with camellias, so, if you don't object, I will complete them; and there are some illuminated scrolls, the inscriptions on which are to be formed of leaves and everlasting flowers. I have done one dozen during the last week, and Alice has prepared a great many. I should like you to give me your opinion of them before you leave the house, auntie, for perhap

you can suggest some improvement, and it will give me pleasure to make the others in accordance with your taste."

"I shall be very happy to examine them, love, but not here, it is too cold for you. Come into the breakfast-room, and we will open the boxes there."

Alice quickly lifted the two boxes of camellias which had been set in the hall, according to her wish, and, turning towards a waitress, who was offering her services, requested her to carry a large millinery basket, which had arrived at an earlier hour, into the breakfast-room.

"The texts we have completed are in it, aunt: so the basket may be sent to the church at any time after you have given us your opinion of our handiwork. We shall want you and uncle to superintend the putting-up business, if you will be so kind."

For some time the ladies were engaged in examining the work done, and in deciding on the manner in which the rest of the texts were to be done.

"Alice has prepared this scroll, intending it to be placed below poor little Anna's tablet. I suppose it was set up yesterday, aunt?"

"Yes, and I am sure you will like it very much ; it is neat and suitable, and affords a very touching proof that the poor are susceptible of kindness, and not insensible to fine emotions of respect and of gratitude."

"Poor little Anna," sighed Mary ; "this time last year she worked with a will, and showed very good taste too, and now——" Her voice gave way.

"And now, my love !" said her aunt, with emphasis, looking at the frail girl with tender interest.

"Ah, it is so sad, to think of her so buoyant as she was, and her bright, happy face, such a picture of health. I used to call her Little Sunbeam, and now—and now——"

The poor girl was completely overcome. She burst into a flood of tears.

"Mary, dear, you must owe this depression of spirits to the over-exertion you have been making for some days. Don't cry in

that manner; indeed, you will be quite ill in consequence. Don't think so sadly of poor little Anna. We all loved her, and we all miss her very much; but we don't weep as you are doing."

Yet as Alice spoke thus, bending lovingly over her poor sister, tears of sympathy streamed down her own cheeks.

But, more deeply read in the hidden sorrows of many hearts, their aunt knew there must be thoughts still unspoken, which had caused such an outburst of grief. So gently laying her hand on Alice's shoulder, she said kindly,

"Let her weep; it will do her good."

And the girl wept on—wept till her full heart was really relieved; then, as she dried her tears, her aunt spoke to her again.

"Mary, my love, I don't wish to press this conversation on you, but I think it would be well if you could analyze your sorrow sufficiently, at least, to know its true cause. Don't think, love, that I speak coldly, and know nothing of your feelings. Believe me, my child, I feel for you, though, as regards little Anna,

I cannot feel with you. It seems to me you have pleasure in thoughts of her, when those thoughts relate to the past. And so have I; therefore, so far, I do feel with you. But when your thoughts come to 'and now,' sorrow overwhelms you—therefore it is I cannot in that sorrow feel with you, or as you; yet I truly say again, I feel for you. I should like to know, dear Mary, what makes it painful to you, to think of Anna as she is now. For those who love her best, find that thoughts of her present and of her future state, are the 'props,' as it were, on which they lean while they journey on in life, without her love to cheer and to support them. Others besides you, Mary, have compared that sweet, unselfish child to a sunbeam:—but a sunbeam which has reached the earth;—and now she is gone, the home and the hearts she cheered are not darkened; because those whom she left behind, hold fast blessed hopes of everlasting life; they look up with the eye of faith, and every hope the gospel points to, shines down into the very depths of their

souls ;—sunbeams of Heaven emanating from the everlasting ‘Sun of Righteousness.’ Mary, dear, your little sunbeam lies beneath the turf in the cold churchyard ; you think death has darkened it. It will come forth again at the ‘Last Great Day.’ But choose, for your own heart’s comfort and peace, those sunbeams which a loving Redeemer is pouring upon you. Lift up your heart. Give yourself to Christ, my child, and, living or dying, be his for ever.”

“You are right, dear aunt, I know, and when I think of poor Anna, as in spiritual existence only, I have no sorrow, for I do believe God’s promises. But sometimes—I can’t help it—when I think of her as she used to be when living, another form comes unbidden, a horrible contrast, I think of her as she is, and—and—it is almost more than I can bear. The decay of beauty, the loathsomeness of corruption, the worm, and—the silence—the darkness of the grave.”

“Oh, Mary ; Mary, my child, hush. Such thoughts cannot be from God—for they breathe

of distrust, and distrust is the parent of rebellion. Yet, perhaps, St. Paul himself had endured a similar conflict at some period of his experience, before he wrote that he was 'persuaded,' 'death could not separate him from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' I wish, my love, that you also could be persuaded of the same comforting truth. It is only a full sense of God's infinite love and of his infinite power to protect, that can seal our hearts and minds with peace."

"I know, dear aunt, that that sense ought always to prevail over fear. Sometimes I rest on God's love, and then I experience the great joy of doing so. I wish I always could."

"God will enable you if you ask Him."

Mary looked calm and happier, and her aunt again took up the scroll which Mary had given her to examine. She read the inscription, "I thank God who hath given me the victory."

The groundwork crimson; gold bands of

small everlasting flowers, and the letters of white camellias and green leaves.

"I like this very much, Alice; it is exceedingly pretty."

"I am glad you think so, aunt. I put the flowers on this morning only; for I wished them to be as fresh as possible. But look at Mary's crown; we thought it might be placed above the tablet."

On a foundation of white silk was interwoven the same gold-coloured amaranthus, in the form of a crown; a crimson scroll attached under, bore the inscription in letters of blue and gold, "Through Jesus Christ our Lord."

"I like both the designs; but who guided you to select that verse?"

"It was Mrs. Melville's choice."

A few hours later the girls stood with their aunt, and uncle, and cousins, looking up at a plain tablet of the purest white marble, surmounted by the floral crown, and with Alice's scroll appended beneath. The tablet bore this simple inscription:—

THIS TABLET IS PLACED HERE BY THE

POOR INHABITANTS OF LYTTON,

IN LOVING REMEMBRANCE OF

ANNA MELVILLE,

WHO DIED 18—. AGED 14.

"Of such is the kingdom of Heaven."

* * * * *

The Yule-log had burned out ; the tapers had dissolved in the Christmas tree ; the ancient greeting of "A merry Christmas" had passed from lip to lip ; "Good-night," and "Pleasant dreams" had been interchanged ; and sleep, like a mantle of silvery vapour for the soul, enfolded the peaceful inmates of the Rectory.

CHAPTER X.

SNOW, AN EMBLEM.

ALL night long, fast and thick the snow-flakes had fallen softly and silently. All the early hours of morning, sharply the frost had frozen firm and crisp the feathery particles ; and there they lay, far and wide, like gems profusely scattered on every field, and shrub, and tree, reflecting the welcome rays of sunlight which were sent to gild the blessed day.

So the morning, Christmas morning, broke on scenes breathing of a newly cleansed world, spotless and pure as when first it left the hands of its Creator.

Every one rejoiced. In the Hall—in the farm-houses—in the cottages—every one was glad. There was “snow on Christmas-day !”

So much for association of ideas ! To the people of England, snow out of doors is as essential for the realization of that glad day, as are carols and church service : as essential, too, as are the indoor accompaniments of roast-beef and plum-pudding, Christmas-boxes and mince-pies, pleasant family reunions, and compliments of the season ; crowned with social gatherings of intimate friends and slight acquaintance, and the prevalence of one invariable symptom, true sign of the times—“enlargement” of all hearts—free, open-handed hospitality.

The snow had been carefully swept off the garden walk, and off the narrow pathways of the churchyard ; and the family at the Rectory stepped forth into the clear, frosty air, as the first stroke of the bells was heard. They entered the little burial-ground. The ancient church stood in the midst of grassy hillocks which covered the dead ; many of them surrounded by a low trellis of wire, along which, in the summer season, the hand of affection was wont to train some simple flower.

But on this Christmas morning, so deeply had the snow fallen, that the graveyard's surface seemed smooth, not broken ; the headstones alone protruded through the far-spread sheet of snow. Nearly every grave had its headstone, whereon were engraven the names of those who "slept" below, and on many of these stones were engraven also quaint lines of rhyme, or, preferable, verse from Holy Writ. But on this Christmas morning no eye could trace the letters ; the interstices were filled with snow, which also lay thickly on the upper edges of the headstones.

"How lovely everything looks," exclaimed Mary, as she detained her uncle a moment, for she was leaning on his arm, and stood still to gaze a little longer on each object.

The low wall which surrounded the sacred precincts seemed but a ridge of snow. The lichens and the mosses, which Mary had so often admired at other times, were hidden now. The large yew-trees, the growth of centuries, usually forming a funereal-looking margin, stood now like giant crystals. Shel-

tered in the deep valley, they always retained their fruit longer than is usual with trees of their kind. But this year the autumn was a protracted season ; winter had delayed its approach, so the beautiful berries still adorned the dark foliage, when, on Christmas Eve, softly and silently the white covering was spread over them—spread over them, but not till a loving son, whose mother had recently been buried, had gathered a basketful of the wax-like, crimson berries. He had not strewn them then on the grave for which they were intended, for he took them home to a much-loved sister ; that she herself, might have the mournful gratification of working out, what her affection had beautifully designed.

And now, as Mary looked around, she saw a young woman, in humble apparel of mourning, turning from a grave situated near the door of the chapel, and proceeding slowly towards the west entrance. On the grave the snow had been firmly pressed, until a sunk place, in the form of a cross, had been formed ; and this cross had been closely filled with the

beautiful crimson berries. The effect was good, but the deed touched Mary's feelings.

"That speaks of true refinement, uncle; yet she is uneducated, I should think, and poor."

"Love, always exercises a refining influence, Mary, and life is a stern educator."

They were silent for a minute or two.

"The poor teach us many lessons, dear, don't you think so?"

"I begin to think they do, uncle; but you know I have been but little amongst them."

"I, on the contrary, have witnessed in the lives of my people much, very much, that is worthy of the warmest sympathy and admiration."

"And—in their deaths, uncle?"

He looked down at his niece, and was struck by the earnest expression of her face. It corresponded with the low, solemnly-spoken question. He knew the inquiry was of heart-interest. He took her hand kindly in his own, as he drew it from the arm on

which it had rested, and, calmly meeting her anxious look—answered, with a radiant smile :

“ And in their deaths ‘perfect peace.’
—Mary, dear, you see the world in spotless beauty to-day, and love to look upon it. Has it not struck you, my child, that it is emblematic ? There is a white robe, in which all must appear before God. How beautiful his Church would seem in his sight, if each of his children would wear the robe of righteousness, which a loving Saviour waits to bestow. This day, my child, we hope to draw very near to God, to have very perfect union with his dear Son. The same robe must be worn in your approach to the table of the Lord, that you will have to wear in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment.”

Tears glistened in his eyes as he handed her through the low-arched doorway, and said, “ May God enable you to lay hold of that spotless robe, and bless you.”

CHAPTER XI.

THE TEACHER TAUGHT.

THE last snow of the season had dissolved. Tiny streamlets, which during the winter had trickled slowly down their narrow, pebbly beds, were lit up by rays of spring sunshine, and became turbulent in joy ; they widened, they deepened, as the thaw contributed to their measure ; they rippled over the smooth little stones, and dashed against miniature crags ; they gurgled and gushed, they leaped and they fell, mingled and parted, parted and mingled, till mingling finally in the wide, deep river, where they rolled on silently—now darkened by the shade of overhanging trees, now brightly reflecting the beautiful blue sky and the fleecy clouds of grey and silver sheen.

The snowdrops seemed to have melted with the snow, the crocus no longer lent its bright colours to adorn the earth ; but in lieu of its striped corolla, its spotless white blossom, or its gold or purple cup, tufts of the pale primrose nestled in the new grass, breathing of hope ; the wind-flower bent meekly ; the colt's-foot scattered its burnished stars, and shone joyously ; and the constant daisy, which had lain its silvery petals close to the ground during the dreary months gone by, sprang up on its slender stem, and borrowed a tint from the rose wherewith to adorn itself.

Under shelter of beech-trees and ancient limes and willows, along a pathway which wound by the river's side, Mary walked slowly, leaning once more on her uncle's arm. But the support of his arm was the least of the support he was affording her. Feeble and drooping was her body, but her spirit was acquiring strength, and pluming its wings for immeasurable flight.

They arrived at a small white-washed

cottage; its roof was thatched, its rustic porch was covered with the early foliage of the honeysuckle, and the small latticed windows shone clear and bright in the pleasant sunlight.

Meekly the high-born girl entered the peasant's home. Noiselessly she crossed the threshold, and passed on to a small bed-chamber. She bent over the lowly pallet, and her jewelled fingers tremblingly pressed the wasted hand of a dying child.

The little one's face beamed with delight as she recognized her visitor, and smiling sweetly, thanked her for coming again. But she was very feeble, and even that little effort was followed by great exhaustion; for though she had journeyed in life during but a brief period, yet she had sped on her heavenward way, and had even thus early, drawn very near to the portal of eternity.

Her advantages had been few, but those few had been blessed to her eternal welfare. Amongst them was attendance for a year or two at the Sunday-school, with Mary as her

teacher. And the child, on her bed of sickness, had often said she wished her kind teacher would come "just once," that she might say "good-bye" to her, and thank her for having taught her about Jesus being the way to Heaven.

So her kind pastor had repeatedly taken his young niece, not only to please the little scholar, but, moreover, earnestly hoping the interviews might prove useful to Mary herself. And he was right. The "peace of God," which kept the little one undisturbed, seemed to enter the heart of her former teacher, during those quiet hours in which they conversed together.

"You taught me, Miss Mary," the child said, one day, "to seek Jesus, and I have found Him, and He is going to take me in his arms to Heaven. I know He loves me, and will take care of me, so I am not afraid to go wherever He chooses."

Sometimes the little one talked of the faded past, of its sunny hours, and its flowery *fields*, of playmates with whom she could play

no more ; the present was seldom even glanced at ; but the future ! Oh, on the future the child could have dwelt for ever. The glory of the redeemed, the love of the Saviour whom she would see face to face, the welcome to her Heavenly Father's arms, his love, his house in which there are many mansions ; his holy angels, and her fellow-saints redeemed—she loved to hear her pastor speak to her of all these things ; they were never-failing themes of wonder and of delightful anticipation to the little believer.

Thus Mary, once the teacher, was taught. She felt humbled whilst in the presence of a child whom it was evident God had accepted and fitted for Heaven—humbled and thankful. Tremblingly earnest she stretched forth her own feeble hands also, craving to touch, even but the hem only, of the Saviour's spotless robe—his righteousness.

Another visit, the last visit, was paid to the white cottage. The latticed windows were screened by white blinds ; the passing

bell tolled solemnly, and Mary wept, for her little teacher had become endeared to her. She wept, but softly, not as those without hope, as still leaning on her uncle's arm, she passed along the narrow walk of the burial-ground, to enter the Rectory grounds, as they returned from the house of mourning.

The sun was setting; a flood of golden light spread over a portion of the churchyard.

"Look, Mary," her uncle said, gently, and pointing towards an old man, who was standing by a grave near the west door. His head was uncovered, and bent low. His clasped hands leaned on a hazel staff, and he seemed deep in thought; but suddenly looking up, the light streamed over his face, revealing an expression of such serenity as is seldom seen; followed by a look of perfect rapture, as he continued to commune with his God. They passed into the garden, as Mary said—

"That is Henry! Oh, uncle, every one can believe but me. I wish I had his faith—and hers."

“Faith, my love,” her uncle answered, “is the gift of God. Ask and ye shall have.”

“I will—I do. But, uncle, will you pray for me, too. You know the Bible says, ‘the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.’”

“My child, I have prayed for you throughout your life. Can you doubt it? But think of our Saviour’s words, and take courage from them, to be assured that no prayers are necessary for you but your own prayers. ‘I say unto you, ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your

Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him ? ” ”

They reached the hall-door, and as Mary entered, her thanks were silently smiled through her tears. She ascended the broad old oaken staircase, and entering her own room, closed the door, and spent some time alone with her Maker.

Months after, when she had passed away from her early friends and her early home, the following lines were found in her portfolio, written in pencil, and those who loved her found comfort in reading them :—

Low drooped the human form, which loitered in the shade,
Bowed down with poverty, and bent with weight of years.
His hand the hazel staff no longer firmly grasped ;
But trembling, strove to guide. Dejected was his look,
And almost mean his guise ; yet o'er his brow he wore
The silver crest of age, and his high forehead, stamped
As the faithful index of a virtuous soul,
Proclaimed that hoary head, a crown of glory, set
On an heir of Heaven and immortality.
He stood, almost alone—the old man stood beneath
The aged yew-tree's shade. Long was the path he'd trod
To gain that sacred shrine ; but now the spot is reached ;
He bares his furrowed brow, and full the mellow'd ray
Of sunset's golden light, beams o'er it, and liquid,

Like a tide of glory, spreads o'er the grassy grave.
He stands—he gazes on the sod, so fresh, so green,
So bright. Clasped are his hands, with head bent low—
he prays.

Fond thoughts have wrapped his mind within their cloud-
like web!

Soft fall the lingering shades of fleecy joys sped by.
But see! His memory's view of transient hopes becomes
Enwrapped in sudden gloom. Hopes! Whither are they
fled?

Left in their place is nought—impenetrable space—
Dark chaos. Thence has dawned Reason's first streak of
light—

The glorious harbinger of new-sprung mental day.
Now from his upraised eye expression beams,
Of love, of joy unspeakable, of peace,
Such as ne'er mingles with the carnal joys
Of unregenerate man; but by the
Quickening Spirit of his God is breathed
When new life bursts upon a ransomed soul—
When captives' chains are loos'd, and slaves set free—
And sweet assurance swells the lips' response
To heart-felt melody.

CHAPTER XII.

MARY AND ALICE.

'Twas evening. Hand in hand, as in days gone by, and seated by their dressing-room window, the sisters were contemplating an autumnal landscape, silently admiring it.

Pale was the beautiful face of Alice. Paler far than her sister's, for it was the pallor of mental agony lay there, in contrast with the hectic hue produced by bodily pain.

It was not because the sisters' hearts were hard to read, that their looks were of such duration and earnestness. Oh, no ; in every feature of either face, was an interpretation of the mind it mirrored ; an interpretation hardly needed, so well was each girl versed in the thoughts and feelings of her loved companion.

Yet it seemed strange there was so little of corresponding expression in their youthful countenances. Whilst Alice was well nigh bowed down with sorrow, the eyes of the dying girl shone forth brightly, the spirit's rejoicings, and a smile rested on her lips.

Oh, it was beautiful to see, that by one so young and so fair, all the glittering allurements of the world were put aside, and in answer to the Holy Spirit's call, the heart, forsaking worldly wealth and this life, had cast anchor in the haven of God's mercy. It was sweet to contemplate such a happy illustration of the joy there is in believing, of the peace which prevails even over death when resignation is the result of Christian assurance.

"I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."

This was the feeling paramount in Mary's heart; and as Alice read it her own spirit sank within her.

She could not meet that beaming smile

which her trembling lips refused to exchange ; and, turning abruptly away, she strove to conceal that grief, which was greater than her power of self-control.

Then Mary's subdued tones broke on the stillness. Stretching her hand towards Heaven, she said, " See, Alice, many times we have loved to watch bright clouds like those, as they floated beneath the still blue sky. Do you see them ? Look, love." And she bent her slender figure towards Alice.

Then for the first time Alice wept freely. And, looking full upon her sister, replied, " Too well I remember how we used to love looking at them. But, Mary, they fleet by as do our fondest hopes, and now I have no pleasure in them."

And Mary soothingly, but seriously answered, " If they indeed fleet by, dear Alice, when they are driven away, we see beyond them. The loveliness of the sky never fades. Sometimes we have looked for it a long while, and clouds have concealed it, but now, how clear, how beautiful it seems ! Dearest," (and

she folded her frail arms round her sister's neck,) "when you have no sister here, when her spirit dwells in another world, you will often see a sky like this. Think of me, sometimes, then, love, and remember that when Mary was dying, she showed you those light silvery clouds, and thought they were like worldly pleasures which hide the face of God from our view. Then, dear Alice, you will lift up your heart to God and Heaven. But there are dark clouds, too, Alice; clouds of sorrow, perhaps worse still, of distrust. Oh, happy the hour in which such are dispersed. I can see the gracious countenance of mercy now, it reveals itself clear and unclouded. Yes, look up with me, dear, and contemplate it. Sorrow and grace have driven away all shades that intervened. The chastening hand of an Almighty Father has been laid on me, but now his spirit imparts comfort and peace. He has done scourging me, and is about to receive me into his Heavenly home, where, if a tear remain in the eyes of his children, He Himself will wipe it away.

"Alice, a few short months ago, how I shrank from the thought that soon I should be numbered by the world as one of the dead ! The gloom of the grave, the mystery of it, seemed to me so terrible ; but, oh, the horror of the worm ! of the cold, heavy clay ! How I loathed the thought ! How in affection I clung to the flesh, of which I had a presentiment that it was to be destroyed so soon ! I did not dare to speak of it to those who were nearest and dearest to me, until last Christmas, when I betrayed my anxiety unintentionally ; but now I speak freely to you, my darling sister, that the same fears may never agitate you ; for now I can joyfully rest all my hopes in God ; and I can glorify Him, as I mark his wonderful plan, to fit his people for their inheritance amongst the saints.

" 'Flesh and blood cannot enter Heaven.' Oh, what comfort I have derived from reading St. Paul's beautiful epistles. Again and again I have read them, hoping each time to learn something more of the hereafter that I dreaded. And now I can sincerely say, I have

no fear of death or the grave, or the judgment beyond the grave; for I am persuaded that death cannot separate me from the love of Christ; and I know that in the grave I shall leave all that is corruptible and unfit for our inheritance, and that Christ will raise me from it, and give me 'a body like unto his glorious body.' Do you remember those beautiful verses of St. John's, 'Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore, the world knew us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.'

"Oh, what precious words of comfort these have been to me, since I felt how soon I must die! And almost daily I have read that other blessed portion of Scripture, the fifteenth chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians. It is such joy to think that, 'as we have borne the image of the

earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.' ”


“Mary, dear Mary,” replied Alice; and her colourless lips and cheek, and her low, earnest voice, alone evidenced how much she felt, “I am thankful you have had courage to speak to me so fully on this subject; I have longed to broach it, but dared not. I ought to be thankful to God, also, for his dealings towards you, my dear sister, even if very soon He takes you to Himself. I try to feel submission to his will.

“But tell me, Mary, have you observed those other words of St. John’s, in connection with those you have just repeated: ‘And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure;’ and also St. Paul’s words, ‘The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be glorified together?’ ”

“I have, Alice, I have. I know that

‘without holiness no man shall see the Lord’; and when I first felt this, I trembled lest the glory I had but just begun to hope for, should never be mine. I thought with sorrow that I had never done anything for Christ, though I had been taught how much He had done for us. I felt that all my affections had been earthly ones, and that I had not laid up even one treasure in Heaven, Alice. I was more unhappy than I can tell you. I thought, oh! if I might but live long enough to do something for Christ, that I might not be rejected as an unprofitable servant. Then I remembered Christ’s words to his disciples, ‘When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do;’ and I thought, if Christians who devote all their energies to Christ are only unprofitable, what must I be, who have live entirely for myself and for a few of my fellow-creatures? and I shuddered when I read the fate of one who was sentenced to be cast into outer darkness, where there shall be weeping,

and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. But, Alice, my eyes were on the page of the gospel, and I read on, and, oh! what hope began again faintly to gleam on my heart, as I read the rest of that chapter. It is the twenty-fifth of St. Matthew. I scarcely dared to believe, though; that Christ would really accept any little kindnesses we may have done amongst the poor, as done unto Him. But I knelt down, and though I knew not what to say, yet God knew why I wept and what I needed. In my heart, I wanted his Holy Spirit; and my Heavenly Father suffered it to lead me, to enlighten me, to comfort me. Yes, Alice, I am sure it was the Holy Spirit that helped me. For text after text shone on my memory like a welcome lamp, and by God's Word I saw that only the filthy need to be made clean, and that the fountain of Christ's blood, and the sanctification of the Holy Ghost, are on purpose for the sinner. I saw, too, that only the naked need to be covered, and that Christ's righteousness is a robe ample enough to cover



every sinner on earth. I stretched forth my hand; I only cried for mercy, and my feeble faith, which God Himself imparted—faith in Jesus Christ, the Saviour, has been imputed to me for righteousness—I mean, has been accepted, instead of my works, which are not worthy; nay, more, I have, by God's grace, become an actual partaker of Christ's holiness, which makes me pure and acceptable in the sight of God."

Both sisters were silent for some minutes—Alice, with her head bent low, as her tears flowed fast and unrestrained; Mary, with her fine beaming countenance upraised, her parted lips slightly moving, as inaudible words escaped them.

"Alice, dear, why do you weep?" the dying girl said at length. "Don't you believe that it is only my body which will return to dust, that my spirit will be taken back to the God who gave it? Yes, to the God who gave it; and yet," she continued, and a shade spread over her thoughtful brow, "this is the only dark spot I am tempted to fear in all the long

valley of the shadow of death. I ask myself again and again, How shall my spirit so soon see God? How shall it yet be admitted into the world of bliss? Do any but the judged enter there? And where do departed spirits abide whilst ages roll by, and the day of judgment is awaited?

“Away, away, unholy temptation!” she continued, firmly closing her eyes, and again raising her countenance; “if there be mysteries which the human mind may not penetrate, faith must at least foresee that a provision has been made, and that, too, ‘where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest.’ Yes, yes; it shall be enough for me to know that ‘nothing can separate me from the love of Christ.’ I fear not to die: it is only to exchange my home, to abide in the world of spirits, instead of lingering in this: to be with the blessed who have ‘overcome,’ anticipating promised joys, and crying continually, ‘Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.’ Sometimes I think that now *I know* how good God is. I should like to

live a little longer, that I might tell it to others; but He knows best. It will be sweet to sing his praise with the host Mercy has redeemed—oh, very sweet!—for God is good.

“Alice,” she continued, after a lengthened pause, “I used to think that you were fitter to die; and thoughtless as I was in general, I have sometimes reflected, and I may say I have envied you. I could never have supposed God would have chosen *me* first, unless it were in anger He had cut me off for ever. But, oh, no! ‘He is slow to anger, and of great kindness.’ He is not rejecting, but is accepting me; it must be for Christ’s sake.”

A few tears now stole gently down the girl’s cheeks, as half musing she continued—

“Still, I should have thought He would take the gentle first. I was so thoughtless, so merry; but you were always serious and calm, though cheerful. I would not have left this gay world, if God had only asked me; but you—your spirit has ever been willing to soar above—only the flesh is weak. Go on,

dear Alice, go on ! Mortify the flesh ! You can't *profit* Christ, but you can *please* Him, by devoting your body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God ; using every limb as instruments in his service, simply as an acknowledgment that you are bought with the price of his blood, that you are thankful, and will never presume to try to draw near to the Father with any kind of service or offering but by the Son. Yes, Alice, I repeat, that if but a few short months since, God had only asked me to leave all I love in this beautiful world, I would have pleaded Him to let me linger here. But see ! Gently, yet irresistibly He drew me away by the cords of affliction. He has laid his Fatherly hand upon me, and is taking me to Himself."

"Dear Alice, you are not so likely to wander as I was ; and therefore you may remain for the good of others. But God loves you. He watches over you. He will receive you when your work is done."

"Do not weep. Although I weep, yet I never felt so happy before. I never be-

fore knew God as He is. Dear, dear, Alice."

In each other's arms the sisters mingled their tears.

Angels looked on.

* * * * *

In Christ's garden on earth there were two fair flowers. But the one had bowed its beautiful head; a storm had bent it to the ground.

Angels looked on.

They saw its snowy petals, and feared the next unsparing blast might annihilate the delicate loveliness of so frail a blossom.

Divine assent is given. Angels stoop from on high.

The flower is gathered, and in sinless bosoms is borne away to bloom in the courts of Heaven.

And its remaining companion?

The dew falls frequent upon it, and the warm sunshine succours it; and its fragrance

is still bestowed on each passing breeze. Daily its beauties expand, and soon, when grown perfect in loveliness, God will again send his holy angels, that they may reunite it with its former companion, which is already in that clime, the light of which is the Sun of Righteousness. There all flowers transplanted from the earth,—are everlasting.

THE END.

HARRILD, PRINTER, LONDON.

